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A FARRAGO







# A FARRAGO

BY  
MAX EHRMANN  
"



CAMBRIDGE, MASS.  
CO-OPERATIVE PUBLISHING COMPANY

1898

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MY DEAR BROTHER ALBERT : —

Here is a sentence from Lamb about some lines written under a "full length" of David Garrick in the Abbey: "It would be an insult to my readers' understanding to attempt anything like a criticism on this farrago of false thoughts and nonsense." Sometimes I have felt like saying just this about the volume before you.

The desire to make a book has at last overcome me, and this farrago is the result. Where I have been cheerful, you may attribute it to good digestion, if you like; and where I have been gloomy, to anything else that pleases you.

I hope, as you doubtless will, that my subsequent books may have a better claim to merit than this first adventure, which, in remembrance of your constancy, despite the many tricks time has played me,

I AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBE TO YOU,

M. E.

PARKER HOUSE, Boston, 1898.







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THE OLD MAN'S ANSWER

WHAT THE NIGHT SAID

THE LIGHT WITHIN







# THE BLOOD OF THE HOLY CROSS

*“The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind  
A savageness in unreclaimed blood.”*

Hamlet.







## THE BLOOD OF THE HOLY CROSS

### I.

**H**ENRY VAN ABERING I met at Harvard College. He was tall and slender, decidedly dark in complexion,—almost copper colored,—had a large thin nose, small bright eyes, high cheek bones, and very black hair. He walked, I imagine, somewhat as Abraham Lincoln, with his arms hanging at full length by his sides, and with long springy steps; but with more vivacity. Had it not been for his excellent taste in matters of dress, and very gentle breeding, he would not have been the most pleasing sight to behold. He came from New York City, where his father, in his life-



time, had inherited and amassed a considerable fortune, and where his mother and sister were still living.

I had come out from Boston, where I had tarried a few days, in order to get a room near the university for the year's study. Van Abering attracted me, for in my difficulties in becoming properly enrolled as a student, he had been of no little service, and was ever ready with suggestions and sympathy. I broached the subject of getting a suite of rooms between us, which was agreeable to him; and out we started to ransack Cambridge for suitable quarters. Everywhere in the windows bright placards were calling loudly for tenants, "Rooms for students," "Rooms for students." We hardly knew which way to turn; for since we were a few days earlier than most of the students, the field was ours, and we were determined to be satisfied with only the best. After loitering about the Harvard Square street car station for a while, Van Abering said, "Come, let us go down this way." We went



down a narrow side street, passed the Hasty Pudding clubhouse, and stopped before an immense frame building that seemed without end and occupied almost exclusively by "Rooms for students" which tiptoed to the sills and peeped from nearly every window.

"I have always lived in the other direction," said he, ringing the bell, "we'll try this end this year."

An untidy middle-aged lady — woman, I mean — came round the side of the house, wiping her hands on her apron, as if preparing to embrace us, and wearing a smile that would unarm any unsophisticated youth. "Good morning, gentlemen, good morning."

"Good morning," we said. "We are looking for rooms," Van Abering continued, coolly, not responding to the woman's smile, which with the next sentence elaborated and spread out over most of her face, showing her beautiful white teeth, lately from the dentist.



“Oh! yes, yes; we have plenty of them; just step in.”

At this point an unbeautiful young lady opened the door. One could tell from her smile that she was the woman's daughter. “Oh!” she shrieked, as we passed the door, “you have got paint on you. What a pity — on your coat!” Taking hold of that portion of my attire and holding it before my eyes, she said, “See! — coming through the door. I'll get some turpentine, and rub it off. I should have told you of the paint,” and she hurried off up stairs, singing like a jay bird in winter,—if you know how that is,—while the middle-aged woman began her speech to Van Abering about the merits of the house in general.

The young lady returned almost instantly, and began to administer the oil to my coat. She exercised me there for quite a time (but what could I do?), while her mother was saying to Van Abering:—

“Now, this room, besides the conveniences, has had distinguished occupants. Of



course you know Brown and Baley — they played on the foot-ball team last year. Prescott had that room over there ; he was a base-ball player ; he is in California now, and wrote me that he wants the room when he comes back. But I'll let you have Brown and Baley's ; they were very prominent students." Noting Van Abering's expressionless face, she felt that she must play a different card. "The room here," pointing to one across the hall, "this very room, was occupied by Robert Lincoln last year."

"What are you telling me!" said Van Abering, unpleasantly ; "Mr. Robert Lincoln graduated years ago."

"No, no," shouted the girl rubbing my coat, "only for a day — on a visit."

"Yes, only for a day," echoed the mother, "I should have told you that ; I did n't mean to deceive you about the length of time. It was only for a day — and a night, too, of course. O Robert Lincoln was a fine man ! This is the very room. He used to come out here in the hall and speak to —"



“Mr. Lincoln is no relative of mine,” interrupted Van Abering.

“No, of course; but he is a great man.”

“These rooms will not do,” said Van Abering, warming somewhat. He was being dreadfully bored.

“Oh! Then come this way. Perhaps you do not admire Robert Lincoln. Here—what do say to this? Are you fond of Hawthorne? The grandson of Nathaniel Hawthorne” . . . . They passed into the room, and I could not hear any more.

“Why, it does n’t seem to come out,” said the girl.

I had been smelling varnish all the while; but the house just having been painted, I thought, would account for that. “Let me see the bottle,” I said.

The girl stopped rubbing, reflected a moment, looked at the bottle, then turned and ran up stairs, shrieking, “It’s varnish, it’s varnish!”

At that very instant, the old woman came hurriedly backing out of the room into which



she had led Van Abering. She was pale as death and trembled from head to foot. Van Abering followed her a few steps, his face whiter than hers, his hands nervously opening and closing, and his eyes sparkling savagely.

“What do you take me for?” he roared loud enough to be heard over the whole house, “Do you think I am a fool! I am not bargaining for Lincoln or for Hawthorne’s grandson. I would n’t live in your house!”

Several persons looked over the balustrades of the upper stories to see what the trouble might be, and one of the servants ran into the hall. The old woman continued to back away until she was near me, when her daughter came running down stairs and stepped in front of her; all the while Van Abering was still growling like something inhuman. I took him by the arm and asked him to go away with me. As we passed through the door, he turned to the terror-stricken old woman and said, “You old hag!” He was almost frothing like a mad dog. We



walked two squares before he uttered a sentence. The expression in his face had not changed a jot. He looked more like a brute than a man. At length he said, "I will see you tomorrow," and turned the corner in an opposite direction.

I was greatly discouraged all that day to know that I had fallen in league with one of so violent a temper. I thought he might have seen rather the humorous side of the situation, and asked the old woman if she had a room in which Shakespeare had eaten fish, or what the price of the rooms would be without the Lincoln tradition, which she might easily transfer to another suite. I meant to say to Henry Van Abering, when we met on the next day, that I wished him to relieve me. I feared he would take it unpleasantly; but I did not want to link myself for a year to a man of such a temper, since of that ingredient in character I feared I had a good supply myself.

We met at Harvard Square next morning. His face had its normal expression again.



He took my hand affectionately, and placing his left on my shoulder, said, "I hope you will overlook what happened yesterday. I have already rented apartments, and you can send your baggage there at any time. I hope you will like the place." There was that sort of look in his face that kept me from saying what I had intended. He seemed conscious of being burdened with something from which it was beyond his power to release himself; and a kind of fatal melancholy in his countenance implored one to suffer him his misfortune.

## II.

The house in which we found ourselves installed was the home of a pensioned naval officer, who in by-gone years had been decorated with many petty honors, but was now released from service on account of some optical defect. The mistress of the house was a majestic woman of about fifty. For all the world, she looked more like a lieutenant than her husband, who was small of stature,



very gray, somewhat stooped, and had been evidently on the decline for some years. In domestic battles she was always victorious; and these were not few, now that their means were reduced and they were compelled to let a portion of their house. Although half a century old, she was yet strikingly beautiful; and had reigned in her social sets, in various parts of the world, for more than twenty years.

We had a jolly lot of companions in this house. The rooms just below us were occupied by one William Garrick, a nervous, pipe-smoking, little Freshman from Illinois, who had been accompanied to the college by his guardian uncle. This guardian uncle, who stayed about Cambridge for some time, was the quintessence of practicality and Western common sense.

A suite of rooms on the other side of the house was occupied by one John Francis Avonill. This fellow — but twenty-two years old — had the distinction of being the most proficient connoisseur of wines and one of



the best classical students about the college. A rare combination to be sure! He was the dressiest youth I ever saw, a skilful fencer, could outswear any Irish sailor where swearing was not extremely offensive, and in the presence of ladies conduct himself as a model of propriety and good breeding. His father had been for many years a congressman from one of the Southern states. John Francis may have absorbed the virtues and vices of the South; but where he learned the virtues and vices of the remainder of the world, I cannot venture to suggest, unless it was while living with his father in Washington, where the *attachés* of foreign dignitaries usually entertain themselves after their own peculiar fashion. Like Van Abering, he was tall and had dark hair; but with the complexion and *nonchalant* grace of a woman.

As time rolled on, and the acquaintance existing among the four of us ripened into friendship, we saw in one another better qualities than were indicated by any mere external aspect. Garrick had artistic tastes,



decorated his walls with copies of the old masters, and his mantel and *étagères* with miniatures of Doryphorus, Discobolus, Michael Angelo's David, Harmodius, and The Borg-hese Warrior, about whom Avonill told us imaginary stories that rivaled the fantastic horseplay of the ancient gods. He had a very good and generous disposition, too,—this nervous little freshman,—he supplied our tobacco when we hadn't any (and we generally saw to it that we were out); he wanted to be a doctor and help people, he loaned us money, and sewed on our buttons when we had to have it done at once, and thus sewed his memory into our hearts.

Avonill, though he had bad habits, which I fear sometimes made inroads upon our better natures by way of his good humor, was, above all, the soul of honor; he never injured anybody but himself, and always bore his injuries cheerfully, knowing that they were self-inflicted.

Van Abering was more of a scholar than any of us, of faultless habits, rather sensitive



nature, and a somewhat deep and unfathomable personality. It was impossible to reconcile the demonstration of wrath he made the morning we were looking for rooms with what I had learned of him. I had seen that terrible expression in his face but once since; and that was one morning when we met the old woman in the street. It was an expression one did not soon forget. His feeling against anything seemed never to vanish from him; and while in these fits of passion he looked like a different person.

We had a glorious time in this house. In the evening after study, we often went to Garrick's rooms to listen to our friends of Western learning. There was, indeed, a motley crowd when we got together. The guardian uncle took great interest in all of us, asking all sorts of questions, and what we were going to "follow" when we graduated.

"Come out West," he said, "there's room to stretch there. You can bring some culture with you, and we'll give you some common sense for it."



“I’ve got culture to burn,” said Avonill, lighting a cigarette, and offering one to the uncle, who laughingly refused, saying that he never smoked anything but “Long Green.” “And I don’t intend to sell any of my culture; but am going to take it with me when I die,” continued Avonill, laboring with his cigarette.

“It will probably burn then,” replied the sagacious rustic from Illinois, and the laugh was charged to Avonill.

“My mother has some land in the West,” said Van Abering. “Perhaps you know where it is.”

“The West is a very big place, my son,” responded the uncle.

“It is in Logan County, Illinois. Perhaps you would know from that.”

“Why!” exclaimed the old gentleman, “that isn’t far from where we live—only about thirty or forty miles. How in the world did you come to have land there? It’s a fine country.”

“My father inherited it from my grand-



father. My grandfather once owned the entire county. That was many years ago, of course. I may come out to see the land some day."

This gave the guardian uncle a cue to exploit the West; and he did it in masterly fashion. I fully believed that in Illinois one might find money growing on the trees or in the ground, just as one liked.

After a lunch, which Garrick always had prepared on such occasions, and much tobacco smoke, with many an old and new story—the clock hands up as high as they could go in holy horror of the lateness of the hour—we brushed ourselves off to bed, seldom failing to intimate to the professors in the morning that the lessons had been dreadfully long, and that we were crowded to death with work.

Sometimes the assembly gathered in Avonill's apartment, which was a fine retreat when one had the blues. He knew all the funny stories (and some bad ones) about ancient and medieval celebrities—about Vir-



gil, Cicero, Caesar, Buridan, Boccaccio! de Saint-Evremond and others; and he had a guitar over which he sang humorous and sad old Southern songs. The evenings generally ended in a game of cards, with anything you wanted in the *carafe* from water to old East India Madeira.

One need not be shocked; we all had much to learn; and in due time the sins of college days and careless youth were to be laid aside. We revelled in our freedom, as a lion in his forest; and though we had great plans of what we were going to do in the world, we did not long impatiently for an emancipation from what we had repeatedly heard alumni say was the elysian period of life: and in the end, we should all have turned out well enough, I suppose, had it not been for something that lurked in the blood of one we least suspected.

### III.

Sometimes the old lieutenant and the madame would invite us down to spend the



evening. Although the old officer was on the shady side of life and was henpecked, he had nevertheless a kind of breezy humor that hailed from the harbors of many climes; and many an interesting tale did he take out of his memory, when on occasions we gathered around and pressed him hard, or lured him unconsciously into unfolding the mysteries of the deep or the romances and tragedies of ports and harbors. (I will write some of these out some day.)

One cold evening on the declining side of winter, we found ourselves comfortably planted before the glowing fireplace in the old officer's library. Every wall, except the one containing the large grate, was lined with books. It was a library of the sea — sea stories, voyages, reports of commissions, discoveries, and other subjects pertaining, more or less directly, to sea or ocean lore. Odd foreign weapons were lying carelessly about; and above the books hung a few yellow parchments and old portraits of forgotten heroes of the stormy main. The



chandelier hanging from the centre of the ceiling descended very low, and terminated in Turkish decorations, which smothered and softened the light, so that at the climax of some of the old lieutenant's stories, one half believed himself to be rocking in the very cabin where the thing was taking place. A sort of mysterious glimmer hung over the room; and although in the company of other persons, one felt singularly alone and inclined to introspection, or doubtful as to the exact identity of those present.

We had a merry time, however, on this evening — a statelier merriment than we were wont to have in our own apartments, to be sure, but nevertheless merry. The old officer told us something of his South Sea island life, where one day in the country, some distance from his companions in the village, he was thrown from his horse. “After lying, unconscious, in the hot sun for a while,” he went on, “I was found by an old native, who took me to his hut, and nursed me very carefully. When, after a



few days, I was well enough to go, he told me that, in consideration of his taking care of me, I must marry one of his daughters; and he bade me prepare for the wedding on the morrow. That night I put into my bed a rejected native suitor of my swarthy thick-lipped *fiancée*, and fled. How the affair went off the next morning when they found my substitute, it would be hard to tell. You see, I could not accept the old yellow-skinned islander's daughter, who would have been homely in a flock of cranes, because I had a wife here in the States."

Then Garrick told Mark Twain's Jumping Frog Story with variations adapted to the country of Illinois; and Van Abering propounded idealistic philosophy, and tried to make us believe that nothing existed but ideas, that the very pictures were not there, but in our heads.

"Well, do our heads exist?" asked Avon-ill.

"Nothing but ideas exists," answered Van Abering.



"I thought you said that ideas were in our heads," retorted Avonill, and we had the laugh on Van Abering, who didn't like to be laughed at.

Then Avonill sang "Dixie," "Massa's Body," "Old Kentucky Home," "Swanee Ribber," and other songs that the Southern children learn while they are still teething, accompanying himself on the piano, which stood in the drawing-room near the library door. I never felt so homesick as when he came to the words: "Far, far away," and "All de world am sad and dreary"; for though his voice was not strong, it was as soft and rich in tone as any I ever heard in a drawing-room; and being a sentimental sort of chap, he felt his own music, as did every one else.

Finally, the madame sent in a dainty luncheon (much too dainty for our appetites); after which, as usual, the others settled themselves for whist; while I loitered about the room looking at the books, or had a *tête-à-tête* with the madame if she happened to be



in. Avonill and the old lieutenant played against Van Abering and Garrick. They played in silence for a while, when Avonill began to make innocent sport of Van Abering, because he and his partner had been losing.

“You don’t play well,” he observed, in good-humored sarcasm.

Like a flash this struck Van Abering’s sensitive nature. “Whom do you mean?” he said, and the blood rose into his colorless face.

“You! whom do you think?” said Avonill, carelessly; then turning to Garrick, who was shuffling the cards, he insisted that it was his deal.

Garrick gave up the cards, and the game proceeded as before; except that Van Abering remained silent and did not once look at Avonill, who sat on his right; and who, judging from his continued jollity, was wholly unaware that he had offended any one. But Van Abering sat like one stricken with catalepsy, his face growing paler with every jest



from his opponent. It soon came Van Abering's deal. Diamonds were trumps. They had played around, dividing the spoils, until each player had one card left, except Avonill, who had none. Van Abering led the eight of hearts, the lieutenant put on the ten of hearts, Garrick played the tray of diamonds, and was about to take the trick, when Avonill shouted, "Misdeal! I have no card," at the same time taking the nine of diamonds from Van Abering's lap. Avonill dropped the nine spot on the table, arose quietly, turned, winked to me and the madame, and said, "Gentlemen, that looks as if the cards had been poorly fixed up."

Van Abering sprang to his feet, his chair falling to the floor behind him. "Do you mean to say that I dealt the cards dishonestly?" There was that same ugly expression in his face. He trembled like a leaf, and stared like a savage into his accuser's face.

"Good heavens!" cried the madame, leaving the room.



Avonill, indiscreetly carrying the jest farther, said, "Well, it looks —"

Van Abering heaved like one bereft of his reason, and seizing a poniard that lay among the oriental weapons on a stand by his left, started towards him.

Ugh! it was a disgrace!

"What do you mean?" demanded the old lieutenant, and in an instant he was on his feet, pushed Avonill into a corner and faced Van Abering. "Put away that dagger, and don't make a fool of yourself! You had better leave the room — or the house, if you like."

Van Abering walked unsteadily to the door, turned, and hissing through his teeth, "We shall see each other again," went to our rooms. A few moments later the street door was heard to open and close.

It was all over in a flash. We were all so dumbfounded that for at least a minute no one spoke.

"What a fool!" exclaimed the old officer.

"He must be insane," observed Garrick,



collecting his senses. "Whoever saw such an exhibition of passion!"

Avonill said nothing, though he looked like one dazed by a blow. This look in Van Abering's face was new to him. As said before, one never forgot it. In an instant almost, a good friend and companion was changed into a savage leopard, a wild cat of the jungles.

"This is a disgrace," said the officer. "It must be kept among ourselves. If it had been an arranged encounter on a fair field, it would have been different—but here in the house!"

I did not feel that I had anything to say, as Henry Van Abering was my room-mate and my closest friend.

Presently Avonill arose, said, "Good night," in a dignified and self-sufficient manner, and left the room. He also seemed now changed; he had never before worn so resolute a countenance.

"I believe I'll follow Van Abering and try to straighten out things between them—



explain that Francis was in fun," said Garrick, still agitated.

"No," said the old officer, "it would be too dangerous a task for so unworthy a prize. He has lost his reason. I never saw anything like it in my life."

I could not help it that this estimate of my room-mate hurt me; but I agreed with the old officer that to follow him was not safe.

Van Abering did not come home that night.

#### IV.

The next night Avonill was out until nearly two o'clock.

The second morning later, the old lieutenant left the house before daybreak — a thing he was never known to have done before.

On the third night, Avonill and the old officer came in together, about one o'clock, and retreated to the former's rooms. I went down to ask if they had learned anything concerning Van Abering. As I was approaching the door, which was partially open, I



heard the old officer say, earnestly, "Of course, it is just the place, within the old fort — the island is absolutely deserted."

"Have they agreed?" inquired Avonill.

"It was their proposition," replied the old officer.

I knocked, the conversation ended abruptly; I went in and asked my question, to which both replied that they had not heard or seen anything of Van Abering. Avonill's face was greatly changed, and the old officer was a little nervous with excitement. I at once left them to themselves, for it was evident that they were intent upon private matters.

On the morning of the fourth day it began to snow; and at about three o'clock a darky appeared at the door, to whom the madame gave Van Abering's long storm-cape. It stopped snowing in the evening.

On the afternoon of the fifth day — Saturday — the old officer bade the madame good-bye; saying, as he went away, that he would be back from the hills as quickly as possible — perhaps the day after tomorrow,



and that he hoped to bring some game, too.

Avonill had not been in the house since morning; and Van Abering had not been seen since the night of the affair in the old officer's library.

## V.

At nightfall, a small bent man was prying at a porthole in the old deserted fort on Castle Island, which stands out in the harbor about a half mile from the mainland.

Several hours later, a figure was crouching behind the statue of Farragut, at the foot of the bridge leading from the mainland to the island, as a mounted policeman galloped by on his beat. A few seconds later a skiff emerged for a moment from among the piers of the bridge, and the person behind the statue, wrapped in a long storm-cape, ran across the dimly moonlit road, and disappeared in the shadow where the skiff had receded. All was silent for a little while, when presently oars were heard plying



with all their might in the direction of Castle Island. The tall figure in the storm-cape sat in the stern of the skiff, while a muscular man did the rowing.

Behind them lay Boston; to the north, through the still cold atmosphere, shone the myriad lights of Charlestown, Chelsea, East Boston, and Winthrop; in front, the alternating red and white flames on the lighthouse of Deer Island guided them in their course. With every stroke the skiff was making rapid strides towards the open sea, fully one hundred yards from the pier leading in the same direction. They would reach the island in twenty minutes, they thought; when suddenly a bitter cold gale from the north hurled the fragile boat in the direction of the pier. The oarsman fought the contending currents, the wind, and the broken waves, with all his power, but to no avail; one surge after another carried them upon the pier.

“Pull for your life,” cried the man in the stern, half rising to his feet.



At the same moment, a skiff left Governor's Island, with its bow directed toward the south. The wind and currents which were playing havoc with the other skiff, carried this one with double rapidity; and in fifteen minutes it landed among the snow-covered rocks at the northeast corner of Castle Island. Two men alighted, hastened toward the fort, and climbed through the open port-hole in the east wall, facing the sea.

"Who's there?" said a voice within.

"Avonill and the oarsman."

"Very well, make haste. It is turning colder. Let us go to our post at once; the time will soon be up," said the old man; and the three started towards the southeast corner of the fort. When they emerged from the shadow of the wall, the moonlight shone on none other than the old naval officer, who seemed younger than ever, and in his element.

By night — especially by winter night, Castle Island is as isolated as an island in the heart of the Pacific. Excepting a single old



United States sergeant, it is devoid of life ; and only suggests its former glory by old grass-grown Fort Independence, thirty or forty heavy artillery pieces lying about, and two earthen powder magazines. An acre and a half of uncovered ground lie within the huge stone walls of the old fort ; and on this wintry night, a full moon shed its light upon the untrampled snow of this spacious arena ; a north wind piped merrily over the high walls, mingling with the splashes and gurgling of the giddy waves as they washed the beach of frozen stones.

“What time is it?” asked Avonill.

A moment later the bells of thirty towers in the distant cities tolled the hour of twelve.

They had gained the southeast corner. The old officer led through an opening in the south wall into a stone cell, where a warm fire burned in a fireplace that had been cold since the War of the Rebellion, when the Confederate woman spy William Boyd was imprisoned on the spot where they stood.



“Wait here until you hear the signal,” said the old officer, “then come at once, prepared; and do not forget what I have told you; this is the real thing—the final hour!” So saying, he left Avonill and the oarsman, and started in a northwestern direction across the fort field. Before he had gained the other side, two persons were climbing down the wall in front of him; reaching the ground one advanced toward him, and the other disappeared in the shadow.

“Ah! you have beaten us in point of time,” said the stranger, giving his hand to the lieutenant.

“Yes, let us make haste.”

“Presently,” said the stranger, “we shall be ready presently. Here is your guard,” and he gave the lieutenant a long slender cane.

They walked towards the centre of the field, neither uttering a word, till the stranger broke the silence by saying, “We are ready now.” The old officer gave a shrill whistle, and for twenty seconds the two



stood eagerly looking towards their respective corners.

From the northwest corner, dressed in dark trousers, a white shirt open at the breast, and bareheaded, in measured steps, came Henry Van Abering. He stopped about fifty feet from the two, and stood in the cold, almost naked, as silent as a statue. An instant later, Avonill appeared in his overcoat, which he dropped at about the same distance on the other side.

“Are you ready?” asked the stranger.

“Yes,” answered Van Abering.

Avonill was mute.

“Then come forward.”

Both advanced, took a rapier from the stranger's hand, and fell back about ten feet. The old officer and the stranger moved quickly on either side.

“Ready,” said Van Abering's second, and the game begins.

Avonill moves forward slowly, rolling up his right sleeve; Van Abering comes with a bound; the blades are crossed at the point;



and the latter begins a ferocious aggression, forcing Avonill backward, one step after another.

“Stand your ground and fight!” cries Van Abering, feigning to thrust.

Avonill fences like a master, parrying first to the right then to the left, but with less rapidity than his antagonist, who becomes more feline every second, avoiding punishment by cunningly veering from one position to another. The blood begins to trickle from his bitten lips. He is pricked on the right shoulder by his enemy's point, and wards off a second keen thrust with his left arm.

“Fence fair, you coward!” commands Avonill, jumping aside and recovering his guard.

Van Abering assumes the aggressive again, and thrice does he thrust, leaping like a leopard towards his enemy, following with two blows; Avonill stands his ground and the glittering blades are bound at the hilt. Both recover their guards; and Avonill, hugging his antagonist's sword, maneuvers for an



opening — drops his rapier, and sinks to the ground. It was so quick the old lieutenant did not see it.

“In the abdomen,” cries Van Abering’s second, as they run toward the northwest wall, while Avonill lies bleeding in the snow.

## VI.

On Monday, the seventh day after the affair in the old lieutenant’s library, I was sitting in our rooms, studying, when Garrick came running in.

“What on earth does this mean?” he exclaimed, holding out a letter to me. “Where is Henry?”

“He hasn’t been here for a week; I don’t know where he is,” I said, taking the letter.

It was from Avonill, asking Garrick to come to see him at once, at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Garrick looked at me significantly and said, “I have not seen Avonill since Saturday morning. I shall go to the hospital at once,” and he hurried off very nervous.



There were three letters from New York lying on Van Abering's desk, evidently from his mother or sister, for they were in a woman's handwriting; and in the afternoon a telegram came addressed to him. I was assured that it was now time to endeavor to find my room-mate; so about three o'clock in the afternoon, I proceeded the rounds of the dormitories, inquiring of our friends whether they had seen him. No one could remember to have seen him for several days; and the roll books showed that he had been absent from his classes since the early part of the week before, a fact corresponding singularly with the affair in the old officer's library, which had happened on Monday night. After a useless search of every nook and corner where I fancied my room-mate might be, I returned to our rooms about eight o'clock in the evening, tired and worn, and threw myself upon the couch, when presently there came a tapping at my door.

"Come in."

The old officer entered. After saying,



“Good evening,” in his polite way, he handed me a telegram. “It came this afternoon; I signed for you.”

It was from Van Abering’s mother, asking me if anything had happened to her son, saying that he had not written for some time, that she was very anxious about him, and that I should be kind enough to write her at once, since she had been unable to persuade her son to do so.

I turned to the old officer and asked him if he knew where Van Abering was; but before he had time to answer, Garrick came in.

“Well, what was ailing Avonill?” I asked.

“He is very sick.”

“Is he no better?” asked the old lieutenant, somewhat disconcerted.

“No, he is worse.”

“What ails him?” I repeated.

“Some internal trouble that might happen to anybody, he told me,” answered Garrick.

“Good night,” said the old lieutenant, going to the door, much relieved to know



that it was something that might happen to anybody, and that Avonill had kept the faith.

After Garrick and I talked over the things that had happened, being unable to make out either heads or tails, he went to his room, and I sat down to write to Mrs. Van Abering. I told her what I knew, — which was very little compared with all that had happened, — that Henry had not been about the rooms or attended recitations and lectures for several days, that no one had seen him, and that about a week ago he had quarrelled with a friend. I tried to write as encouragingly as I could, and suggested that perhaps he might be taking a hunting trip up in the Adirondacks, as I had heard him speak of wishing to do.

Three days more passed ; but Van Abering did not return. Avonill's condition remained about the same. Though we had not been admitted to see him, we made daily inquiries at the hospital. On this day I received a telegram, asking me to come to New York, that Mrs. Van Abering wished to see me,



that as yet no word had come from Henry,—signed, “Rosamond Van Abering.” This was evidently Henry’s sister. I wired her that I should arrive in the morning by the Fall River Line.

It was a bright morning for winter time, when I found myself wandering upon the Fall River dock, trying to decide in my mind of which person to ask directions, when presently a coachman presented himself and pronounced my name.

“Yes,” I said. I suppose he knew me from the initials on my dressing case.

“I will take you in the carriage. Let me have your grip. Have you any other baggage?” he asked.

I assured him that I had not, and in a few moments I was rolling over the streets of New York, down Broadway, past Union Square and Madison Square, into Fifth Avenue. The carriage finally stopped before a spacious house, and I was led into a magnificently decorated drawing-room. Despite the earliness of the hour, an adjoining



door opened in a moment and a matronly woman of about forty-five gave me her hand. From the appearance of a girl, who passed the door just opened, I could tell, before the lady spoke, that these were the mother and sister of my room-mate. The mother, whose hair was prematurely gray, but whose face and demeanor were those of a woman who had been fostered amid the best things of this world, still holding my hand, and with a look of deepest maternal feeling, said :—

“You will pardon us for calling you here ; you see Henry is very dear to me, he is my only son ; and what you have written me, and his failure to let me know where he is, have grieved me greatly.” Then calling me by name, “Have you anything additional to tell us ?” she asked, beseechingly looking into my eyes.

“No,” I answered, “nothing.”

Just then the daughter came in. She was the picture of her brother ; except that she was fairer in complexion, not quite so tall, and a little heavier ; but with the same raven



hair and high cheek bones. She greeted me without waiting for an introduction. One could see from her eyes and face that she had slept little of late, and was as anxious as her mother about what had happened.

They sat very near to me, and were eager with attention, while I recited again all that I knew. I told of Henry's quarrel, and related for the first time his attempt on Avonill's life in the old officer's study; but I mentioned no names. I scarcely had the heart to tell it, for it seemed infidelity to my room-mate, and would cause additional anxiety on the part of the mother and sister; but they insisted that I should omit nothing. The girl had tears in her eyes, and the mother's face betrayed a mingling of shame and of anxious sorrow — shame for anything that savored of bravado, and anxious sorrow for the love she bore her son.

“Oh! mamma, what shall we do?” exclaimed the girl.

The mother made no reply; but sat looking into space. She seemed to have a



deeper understanding of the demonstration of wrath made by her son, and of his absence, than either the girl or myself; she seemed to understand something that we did not. What excited mystery in the girl that her brother should have acted thus, seemed only to confirm the mother in her judgments; and as we started for breakfast soon after, she asked me to hold the matter in confidence, and to remain with them until they had at least made some progress toward finding her son.

After we had breakfasted, I wrote letters to every person I could think of with whom there was any possibility that Henry might be staying; and Mrs. Van Abering did the same. The letters were so written that no suspicion might be aroused on the part of the recipients.

I called at the apartments every afternoon and evening, at which times we developed further plans and I reported anything new that I had learned. I confess that the anxiety betrayed by the mother and sister



seemed to me unwarranted, for I believed that in due time Henry would make his appearance.

One evening when I called, Mrs. Van Abering had gone out to seek relief in the company of some friends, and I was received by Miss Van Abering.

“Come, let us go into the library,” she said, “it is cosier. You must not think us cowardly,” she continued presently, “in our worrying about Henry; call it rather over-indulgence in our love for him; but you see—I ought not to tell it, perhaps; but you have been so kind to help us—Henry did this once before, when he was quite small. He quarreled with papa, and five days later was found in Brooklyn.”

This girl had a weird, dark, and careless kind of beauty; and in her conversation she was as naïve as a child, and very daring. “What must she be in her gayer moments!” thought I. Or was it her melancholy that enlisted my feeling. I own she attracted me. But so long as one is silent about such



things — especially to the girl — it does n't matter, I suppose; for as time goes apace, he finds that his affections have outwitted him, and that he has had this same ailment before — perhaps to the number of twenty times ere he has scaled that many years. I had not been long in their apartments before I understood, from different things Miss Van Abering said, and from the frequent presence of a noble-looking young gentleman, that there were other considerations which made the sudden disappearance of her brother of double importance to her.

Seeming to surmise that I understood her inner thoughts, she said, presently, handing me a photograph of the young man: "This is Mr. Buchtel. You see how important it is that no harm has befallen my brother; because" — and then she looked away from me — "because — because we are to be married in a month." From the manner in which she spoke of Mr. Emery Buchtel, and the fondness with which she lingered on topics not foreign to him, I readily under-



stood that the realization of the love of that attachment must have been the dream of her life. She was not more than twenty, and like her mother, had been reared among the best that wealth and gentle environments can give.

I had now an additional motive to find Henry Van Abering.

## VII.

On Sunday afternoon, we were driven to Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn. Although it was a pleasant late winter afternoon, it was too cold to remain outdoors very long for pleasure; but it was not a pleasure drive; the burden had become too great for Mrs. Van Abering, and she sought comfort by the grave of her husband. "Silent comforter, indeed," thought I, as we stood before the tombs of the Van Aberings, upon the frozen ground of one of which Mrs. Van Abering strewed some flowers. How tenderly her husband must have cared for her in years gone by; so that now, long after his death,



when sorrow came, she sought his counsel and protection, as she had done when he still abode near her side. She had lived for him, and now all that remained of the life of the past were her son and daughter. Widowhood had increased the sentiment of maternity in her heart, and the happiness she once found in her husband was born again in her children. How jealously, therefore, she loved her son! and if the cruel archer of destiny had now shot at him, it was too late in life to leave a wound that time could heal.

Never shall I forget her as she stood there against the gray sky of failing winter, as silent as the tombs about her, her hands folded in front, and her face colorless in the chill of the bleak winds. Presently her downcast countenance was raised; and she seemed to receive hope from above, which she could not find in the desolation of the grave. Turning toward us, she said softly to her daughter, "I shall come back in a few moments, stay till I return." She walked slowly to the coach and directed the driver.



“This is my great-grandfather’s grave,” said the girl, in a voice which showed that she had not felt deeply like her mother. The cemetery to her was only a place where people are buried; she had not yet seen love and hope and all that makes us want to live vanish like the final hour of one condemned to die. “This is my grandfather’s sister’s,” she continued, pointing to another; and here lies my grandfather.”

The grandfather’s tomb read:—

ERECTED TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
GUIDO ANDREAS VAN ABERING.

Born 1802.

Died 1859.

*“None but the brave deserve the fair.”*



“Your grandfather must have been a soldier.”

“No,” said the girl, “I think he was never a soldier. He was a business man like papa. Do you see those three diamonds down below?”



“Where?”

“There in the center, where I am pointing.”

“Yes.”

“Do you know what they are?”

“No,” I answered, “I haven’t any idea.”

“Well, I will tell you,” and then she smiled at having aroused my curiosity, “I don’t know myself.”

While we were still talking about the diamonds on the grandfather’s tomb, and wondering what they might indicate, Mrs. Van Abering returned. Hearing the subject of our conversation, she seemed to wish to change it, and made some remark to Miss Van Abering about other matters.

“Mamma, didn’t you ever know what those diamonds on grandfather’s grave mean?” persisted the girl, as we entered the coach to start back.

“No,” returned Mrs. Van Abering, kindly.

“Didn’t papa know either?”

“No, I suppose he didn’t know,” replied the mother, evidently trying to think of some-



thing else to say; for, it seemed, the marks on the grandfather's grave were either somewhat shrouded in mystery, or, in the mother's opinion, were not a subject for her daughter's curiosity and inspection.

"Who put them there?" she continued, after a few moments' meditation.

"It was your grandfather's wish," replied the mother, "that is all I know, my child;" but from the expression of her countenance, where truth and maternal duty seemed at strife, it was evident that that was by no means the extent of her knowledge concerning the three diamonds on the tomb of the grandfather.

. . . . .

The first delivery of mail on Monday morning brought me this letter:—

"I have just heard of Van Abering. He is with my uncle, near Decatur, Illinois—think of it!—going to see his land in Logan County. My uncle says he is sick, and that he requested him not to write anybody that he is there. Say—if you know what all this fuss about Van Abering means, I want



to know—do you hear? Francis was worse this morning. Poor Francis!

Good-bye, old fellow.

WILLIAM GARRICK.”

Mrs. Van Abering and Rosamond received the news with no little emotion. I did not mention Henry's illness. They cried and embraced each other, then laughed a little and cried again—all for joy! It would have been discourteous to smile at them in their happiness; and it was with difficulty that I restrained an expression of my amusement. Women are not to be looked at without danger to one's esthetic notions when they reverse the tenor of their emotions frequently. “All this anxiety for nothing!” thought I. But I was wrong; their emotions had been wiser than my judgment; it was not all over, as I thought. There was one duty yet, that was to try to induce Henry to return home.

“Now, one thing more we have to beg of you,” said Mrs. Van Abering, hesitatingly, turning to me, when the first emotions had



passed. "Will you go and bring Henry back to us?"

I said that I should be glad to, if it were in my power.

"We will reward you for your kindness," continued the mother, uncertainly, fearing that she might offend.

I assured her that what I had done was for the sympathy I had had in their anxiety and the affection I bore my room-mate, and that I should gladly go to Illinois at once, and try to persuade Henry to return to New York.

No time was lost. After I telegraphed Garrick (that I was going to his uncle's home, and that he could reach me there or at the Van Abering farms, if he found it necessary on any account to write me), Mrs. and Miss Van Abering accompanied me in a carriage to the station from which I was to take my departure for Illinois. Mrs. Van Abering was liberal and sincere in her expressions of gratitude; and Rosamond, as I was about to alight from the carriage, clung a



moment to my hand, and said, "Bring Henry back"—then with a twinkle in her eyes and a secret smile about her lips—"and come to us again—in a month come to me often."

### VIII.

In room number thirty-nine of the Massachusetts General Hospital lay John Francis Avonill, pale and thin, now the eleventh day. It was dark and gloomy without, the moaning of the wind and the cheerless view of the sky through the window, sank his once buoyant spirits to their lowest depths. At about two o'clock in the afternoon, he moved slightly, opened his eyes, and said to the nurse, "Did you have the message sent?" His voice was weak, and he spoke very slowly.

"Yes, it went at ten this morning," replied the good woman.

"Has no one asked to see me?"

"No, no one."

He closed his eyes again, and apparently went to sleep.



At five o'clock he repeated the questions, and again at six.

At a little after eight, there came a soft tapping at the door, and the nurse admitted a gentleman into the room, which was now dark. He quietly took a chair beside the bed, as the nurse turned on the lights. It was Mr. Emery Buchtel of New York.

"Francis, what is the trouble? I didn't know you were sick," he said, deeply moved at Avonill's appearance.

Avonill took his thin, white hand from under the covers, placed it in his visitor's, and looking up at the nurse said, "We want to be alone for a while."

The nurse retired.

Mr. Emery Buchtel was a full-blooded youth of twenty-five. His florid face was somewhat white now, as if he were laboring under great anxiety.

"Emery," said Avonill, at length, "we haven't seen each other for a long time — have we?"



“No, but you can't imagine how grieved I am to see you in this condition.”

“I have sent for you to come and stay with me a little while.”

“Yes, I will stay till you are well. Why didn't you send for me sooner? I didn't know you were sick. What is the trouble?”

“Wait, no haste,” replied Avonill in a slow, resigned voice. “I will tell you all; you must give me time.” He stopped a moment to catch his breath, then continued, gripping his visitor's hand more firmly, “You are my nearest kinsman, Emery, besides my father — as you may, perhaps, still remember.”

“Yes, my boy, I have kept *that* much track of you; and I will do anything for you,” said Buchtel, anxiously smoothing Avonill's forehead.

“We played together when we were children — didn't we?” said Avonill, the panorama of his childhood passing before his closed eyes.

“Yes.”



“And I have sent for you, Emery, to tell you that — that I shall never get well.”

Buchtel thought to make some encouraging remark; but the death-like pallor of his kinsman's face did not warrant it. “You have sent for your father, of course?” he asked.

“No,” replied Avonill, “because I could not tell him what has happened. I am going to tell you; that is why I have sent for you; and if when I am gone there is ever need that it should be known, you will tell or be silent, as you see fit.”

Wholly unused to this sort of experience, and having a tender affection for his relative from the memory of childhood, young Buchtel was burdened with emotions that did not readily find words, especially as he was not demonstrative and was slow in speech; he therefore sat silent.

Avonill related the affairs in the old lieutenant's library and on Castle Island, stopping frequently to regain his breath. He made no reference to Van Abering, beyond saying that his antagonist was known to be



linked with such a temper that when crossed he resembled a savage rather than a human being, and that the affair had arisen on that account.

“He must be prosecuted!” said Buchtel.

“No. We are equally guilty, except that I am additionally guilty of poor fencing,” continued Avonill, jesting even on his last bed.

The nurse entered the room and said: “Too much conversation will make you worse. Don’t you think you had better stop now?”

“I will go,” said Buchtel, “and come back to-morrow; but tell me first who this villain is.” His indignation found expression more readily than his sympathy, and was fully as great.

“That does n’t matter much, Emery; it was a fellow student by the name of Van Abering.”



## IX.

There was nothing that distinguished my journey to Chicago, except that I was taken in turn for the poet James Whitcomb Riley, the porter of the coach, and the papa of an innocent little baby that nestled in its mamma's lap in the seat opposite. Of the three enviable personages, I was in doubt as to which flattered me most; but (though I greatly admire Mr. Riley) I believe it was the innocent little baby that continually looked over and called me papa. I changed cars in Chicago, and arrived in Decatur at night, where I stopped at a hotel that was undergoing repairs, "The St. Nicholas," if I remember rightly.

In the morning, I hired a carriage and a driver who was familiar with the surrounding country, and began my search for the home of Garrick's uncle (who bore the same name), in a northeastern direction, on the east bank of the Sangamon River, about ten miles distant.



At noon, after four miles of useless driving, five different guides, and ten miles of cold feet, we halted before a large, white, orderly-looking farm house, partially hidden amid a cluster of evergreens. In the background, a windmill rattled, a spacious red barn shone in the winter sun, and a symphony of barking, cackling, bleating, lowing, and cow-bells, gave lustre and life to the solitary surroundings. East of the house, a little boy was driving sheep, under the loud command of Garrick's uncle, who stood, pants in boots and erect like a general, beside a last year's straw stack. I shivered myself around the side of the house, and knocked. Presently the door was opened by a calico dressed old lady, whose spectacles were poised so far on the end of her ample nose that she had to hold her head back to keep them on and to get a look at me through the lenses — or lens, for I believe one was missing.

“Does Mr. Garrick live here?”

“Yes,” replied the good old lady, her head



falling back and her mouth opening generously, "did you want to see him?"

"Yes."

"Well, come into the house. You look cold."

I went into the warm room, looked about; but didn't see Van Abering. In a short time Mr. Garrick came. There was that sort of genuineness in the hearty reception which he gave me that compensated for the cold ride. He asked about his nephew, about Avonill, made apologies for his appearance, presented me to the other members of the family, ordered two extra chickens for dinner, brought some home-made wine, and bestirred himself and the entire household as if I were the preacher or the congressman's son. He couldn't imagine why I had come; but I could tell that he didn't want to ask.

Presently he said, "Henry Van Abering is with us."

"Yes, I know," I said. "Where is he?"

"He took his gun for a hunt; he generally



comes back about sundown," replied Mr. Garrick.

About five o'clock in the evening, I was rocking over the rag carpet, before the large open fire-place (in form much like those on Fifth Avenue), observing a gaudily colored picture of the Brooklyn Bridge that hung on the wall, when the door opened, and in walked Henry Van Abering. Except a scanty black beard that covered his face, and old clothes, he looked about as usual.

I turned, stood before him, offered my hand, and said, "Henry, how are you?"

Dropping his hat to the floor, he took my hand, and replied, after a moment's silence, "I know why you have come." There was no lustre in his voice and countenance; they were resigned and dead. "You came to tell me that the authorities want me," he continued in a low voice, as if fearing to be overheard.

"Yes, the highest authorities."

He looked me straight in the eye.

"Your mother and sister."



There was evident relief at this, and he gave me his hand again ; but he did not say much more. The great change which had overtaken his disposition and what he had said about the authorities were alike mysterious and inexplicable to me.

In the evening after supper, we sat together in a room upstairs, where a glowing fire had been built some hours before. He asked very affectionately of his mother and sister, and how I had come to go to New York, and of the affairs about the college. He spoke very kindly throughout, and confessed that he was glad to see me.

“ Henry,” I said, at an opportune moment, “ your mother and sister have sent me here to ask you to come home.”

He shook his head, as much as to say, “ I wish I could ; but that would be impossible.” “ Some day,” he said, still more resigned, “ I will tell you what my greatest enemy has done.”

“ Who is he ? ” I asked, thinking of poor Avonill.



“It is myself,” he said, walking to the window, and looking out into the night, to hide his emotion, “it is myself, it is a part of me that makes me different without my will. It must be my blood.”

I understood that he referred to his temper; he had spoken more truly than either he or I knew; but not more truly than his mother knew, and we were yet to learn. He was more reticent this evening than I had ever seen him before; he walked up and down the room and frequently looked out the window into the cheerless night. Once, after a long silence, still facing the window, he said, partially to me, but perhaps more to himself, “And we are to know ourselves.”

A stranger would not have understood what he meant. I had been long enough around him to know that he was looking within, endeavoring to comprehend the demon that at times rankled in his breast. He knew himself inseparably bound to an uncontrollable temper; which his excellent breeding, in better moments, caused him to



loathe; and which made him at times as melancholy as the mystery of its origin, development, and hold on him made him distrustful of himself.

“I am not fit to live among others,” he said, again at the window. “I will live alone.”

I tried to think of something to say in order to recall him from the misery of his introspection and melancholy — but what? I thought that cards might occupy his mind, and I said, “Henry, will you play a few games of hearts or euchre or anything you wish?”

He dropped into a chair, as much as to acquiesce; but the games dragged heavily; he was not thinking of cards, and played like a novice.

“Let us stop,” he said, after we had played a short time. “I believe I will go to bed,” and he arose and started toward the door.

“Wait,” I said, thinking of his mother and sister.

He turned.



“Won’t you promise to go back to New York with me to-morrow?”

“No,” he replied, in cold resignation, “I am going to drive to my mother’s farms, and there I shall always stay. Good night,” and he closed the door. There was the same chill in his voice, as if his heart were frozen in the contemplation of the self-imposed monotony of life that stretched out before him, and that was to expiate and render harmless his mysterious unruly nature.

“Goodnight,” I said, feeling that I had failed in my mission ; and, with a heavy heart, I wrote Mrs. Van Abering a letter, far more hopeful in its nature than the situation warranted, but I had not the courage to do otherwise.

## X.

We found ourselves around the breakfast table about seven o’clock — Henry Van Abering, Mr. Garrick, Mrs. Garrick, the little girls, the little boys, the big girls, the big



boys, and myself. Henry had already told Mr. Garrick of his intention to drive that day to his mother's farms in Logan County. After breakfast he said that, if I chose, I might accompany him. A good horse and a sort of old-fashioned carriage were ready for us at ten o'clock, when we said good-bye to the kith and kin of Mr. Garrick. Though Van Abering had been about as glum as a monk, a kind of attachment had grown up between him and the farmer; and it was with true affection that the old man held his hand and said, "Good-bye" and "take care of yourself."

The sun shone warmer than on the day before, thawing the frosts of a long winter; the North had a milder breath and blew less persistently; and on hillsides and in fence corners lingered only scanty vestiges of the snowy winter. We had forty miles before us; but since the gloom had lifted somewhat from Van Abering's spirits, and we were going into a country hitherto untravelled by us, which inspired the tingling sensation of ad-



venture, the journey did not seem long or devoid of possible pleasure. We started, according to Mr. Garrick's commands, in a northwestern direction, toward Logan County. We crossed an old moss-grown bridge that looked like a remnant of prehistoric times, beneath which the river Sangamon hummed its ancient music, as it did in the days when Abraham Lincoln plied on its eddies. A long and beautiful road stretched before us; on either side, after the dismal death of winter, nature seemed turning again in her grave for a timely resurrection; the green meadows contrasted strikingly with the white snow of the hillsides and the gloom of the sombre forests.

The scene appealed to Van Abering no less than to me—perhaps more. He spoke of the regeneration of nature, and wondered what life would be if we could be likewise renewed in youth and power. His brooding over the strangeness of his own nature had made him older than he should have been for his years; and he, therefore, took the



scene more seriously than I. It was indeed a beautiful morning—different than I had ever seen before ; for in the city the transition from winter to spring is not so visible. It was too good to last.

Van Abering told me all that he knew about the extent of his mother's land, which comprised between two and three thousand acres, being the remnant of a much larger tract that came into the estate during the life of his grandfather, Guido Andreas Van Abering. Beyond this, the situation of the land, and the name of the principal tenant, he knew nothing.

One by one the miles receded in the distance. When one of us was cold, he ran along beside the carriage until the blood coursed in his veins with greater celerity. We discussed every subject from the pains of toothache to the supposed rights of the English government to grasp all the available territory of the earth, and the improvements we should make in the construction of the universe were the matter left in our hands.



At twelve o'clock we stopped at a farm house, fed our horse, got something to eat ; and went on our journey an hour later. About two o'clock the sun disappeared, and clouds began to loiter through the sky ; at three we passed through a little town called Mount Pulaski, where we stopped awhile ; at four o'clock it began to grow dark and cold.

Thus far we had had no difficulty in following the directions given us by Mr. Garrick and corroborated by persons along the way ; but now the road which we were travelling terminated in two forks leading in almost opposite directions. It was too late in the day to advance very far upon mere conjecture ; and the gathering clouds, and the sharp winds that had risen, made us all the more anxious to get to our destination. There was but one house in sight, a hut about a half-mile up the road on the left, at the base of an immense hill. Thither we drove as it began to snow. It was an old log house that looked as ancient as the soil into which



it was receding. There was one window facing the road, another on the other side had been nailed up. The addition on the back looked newer than the front, for the clay pressed between the cracks in the logs still retained some of its original color. There was no other building as far as the eye could see, except an old barn about fifty yards to the rear. A few white objects, like tomb-stones, peeped from the top of the hill which ascended almost straight. The road evidently had been cut through the beginning of this immense elevation, for it was walled like a cañon and rose but gradually to the top.

“I don’t believe anybody lives there,” said Van Abering, as I passed through the opening in the rail fence to inquire our way.

“Yes, surely,” said I, “there is smoke coming from the rear chimney,” and I knocked at the front door.

There was no response for some moments; and all the while it was getting darker and colder. What started as a snow-fall now be-



came a storm of sleet and hail with occasional gusts of rain that dashed into our faces. The horse began to shake with cold, and we, not prepared for such an unexpected change in the weather, were becoming wetter every moment.

I knocked again, very impatiently, as the door opened, and a girlish voice said:—

“Goodness me! Come in out of the rain.”

“No,” I said, “we must go as quickly as possible; but we have lost our way. Is anyone here who knows the roads of this neighborhood.”

“Oh yes, my grandfather! I will call him,” and off she skipped to the rear of the house.

“I am afraid we can’t go any farther,” said Van Abering; “in a half-hour it will be as dark as midnight.”

Presently a fat, old man came hobbling to the door. He looked as a bust of Homer would look, had Homer been better fed. “Well,” he said, “what is it you want to know?”



I told him where we wanted to go, and he smiled and said:—

“The nearest way is to drive around the side of the house to the barn, put up your horse, and go in the morning. There is a dreadful storm in the sky; and you are welcome here, if you will take things as we have them.”

It was nearly impossible to proceed on our way, and there was such kindness in the old man's voice that we took the advice and drove to the barn. When we arrived there, he came from the house with a lantern, and helped us attend to our horse.

“Now, come into the house,” he said, as he turned and started back by the path he had come. He was a man of almost monstrous proportions, but very gray and rusty in appearance. Like the house in which he lived, he seemed to belong to a by-gone age.

We entered the dimly lighted kitchen, where the girl and a very old woman were cooking the evening meal.

“Come and sit by the fire,” said the girl,



placing two chairs before a large old-fashioned stove that was gleaming with heat.

We sat down, as the old man began to put wood on the fire. The walls of the room were as rough on the inside as on the outside; and in several places the rain began to trickle through the clay-plastered crevices.

“Did you come from Mount Pulaski?” inquired the old woman, opening the oven door.

“From near Decatur,” answered Van Abering.

“There now, put your feet inside the oven,” she continued, “they’ll get warm quicker.”

Van Abering obeyed, and it was with difficulty that he suppressed a broad smile at the spectacle of himself sitting there roasting his feet and legs. At that instant there was a terrible crash behind my chair, and I thought the hut must be falling to pieces! I turned, feeling like a soldier who stumbles in battle and imagines himself shot.



“Oh!” said the girl, “grandfather, you have scared the gentleman.”

“Did I? It was only wood,” said the old man, apologetically, standing before a huge arm load that he had just dropped to the floor.

Presently, supper was prepared and we were invited to sit around the table. The lamp was taken from the shelf in the corner of the logs and placed in the center of the table. The old woman, who was very thin, sat at one end with the girl; Van Abering and I sat on the sides; and the old man occupied the other end.

“Oh, how it storms!” said the girl, looking at us sympathetically, as the wind and sleet and rain beat against the roof and sides of the house.

“You couldn’t have gone much farther,” said the old man.

“No, I fear not,” observed Van Abering, as the old woman almost forced him to have some more rabbit.

“You must not be bashful,” she said, “just make yourself at home.”



Van Abering assured her that he was not bashful, and ate his supper with evident relish. He had never eaten at such a table before; and the kindness and interest of these people, who in his eyes were of the lowest stratum, robbed him of his melancholy and pleased him greatly. He was constantly looking at the old man, in whom he seemed to take immediate interest — a rare thing, indeed, for Van Abering. There was a sort of homely generosity in the large mouth and nose, gray hair and soft voice of this rough-looking octogenarian that solicited confidence and made one feel welcome and safe. I dare say that otherwise we should have felt lonely and desolate; for the storm still raged, the wind moaned bitterly above the hissing of the sleet and rain, and here we were in an old log house in the heart of Illinois.

After we had eaten, Van Abering and I sat around the stove in the kitchen, while the old woman and the girl put away the supper things. Meanwhile the old man dis-



appeared through a door leading into the front part of the house. Van Abering sat silent, and I was thinking how I might approach with impunity the question of his returning to New York, when the old man opened the door he had passed through and said:—

“Come in here.”

I looked inquiringly at Henry, who was on his feet, going toward the door. We passed through a dark room and entered the old part of the house, where a bright fire popped and cracked in the fireplace, in the west side of the room. There was no light save that furnished by the fire, which was sufficient. This room was plastered and covered with light paper. In the center stood a table heavily laden with an immense pictorial edition of the Bible and a photograph album. On the walls were bric-a-brac, photographs, and brilliant landscapes, that betrayed the artistic tastes of the girl; and in one corner stood a gun that suggested the heroic or hunting spirit of the old man.



"Sit down," said he, drawing two home-made rocking-chairs to the fire, and loading himself into a big one, evidently made especially for him.

"Where did you say you came from?" he asked, filling a monstrous pipe.

"We originally came from New York," answered Van Abering, who was stalking about the room, looking at the things. Presently he took the album from the table, came to the fire, and began to look at the tintypes.

"I suppose you don't know any of these persons," said the old man, smiling.

"No," said Van Abering; "but who is this?" He had stopped at a pen picture almost worn-out with age and handling.

"That — that is supposed to be the picture of an Indian girl. An old comrade drew it years ago.

"Is it a drawing from life?"

"Indeed it is. She was once as alive as you are. I knew her well. She once saved my life."



“From the Indians?” I asked.

“Yes, from her father’s tribe.”

“Have you been here so long as that?” asked Van Abering, looking reverently into the old man’s face.

“My son,” he replied, placing his hand on Van Abering’s shoulder, “I have been here since 1825, only fourteen years after William Henry Harrison fought the Indians in Indiana, when these regions were a wilderness, and Indians and bears roved through the woods. My old comrade, who must be dead by this time, and I fought many a red-skin, had many a narrow escape from death, and one or the other has known nearly every emigrant who traveled over this road from that time until the railroads were built through here. I should have been dead twenty years already,” he continued, good-humoredly; “but I don’t die, and every year that I live is better than the last.” He leaned back in his chair, musing, and drawing from his pipe great volumes of smoke which hastened up the chimney. “My com-



rade was a brave man. He loved the Indian girl," he said, quite as much to himself as to us.

There was a brief period in which the old chronicler of a by-gone age sat silent and with closed eyes ; doubtless he was thinking of the early days ; perhaps the suffering and hardship were forgotten now, and only the romance remained, colored and unified by many repetitions in the long years that had gone into the past. For a long time in the early years, he had been a source of information to emigrants, as to roads, good lands, dangerous passes and the like ; he had been sought after far and wide ; and had harbored many a caravan of covered wagons overtaken by storm, night, or hostile Indians. He was the last of his generation — the last to tell the story of an unwritten time.

Van Abering was aflame with curiosity, and I was planning how to draw from the old man some of his early experiences. The girl came in and sat beside her grandfather, leaning her head on his broad shoulder ; the



flickering fire made grotesque shadows on the walls ; and the wind and storm were still going at a merry pace ; but what cared we, housed beside a glorious fire, and with the possibility of many a thrilling tale of adventure before bedtime.

“Would you tell us something of your early life?” asked Van Abering eagerly. I had not seen him so bright and interested for a long time ; his brooding — over what was defined in his own mind as the mystery of his nature, and which showed itself in uncontrollable outbursts of violent passion — had wholly disappeared ; and he seemed greatly absorbed in the old pioneer, under whose narrow roof destiny had driven us for a night.

“I will tell you something about this country as it was when I first came here, and how I came to live here,” said the old man, seeing our interest, “and when you get sleepy, we’ll all go to bed.” The girl nestled more closely to him, and he told a story something as follows :—



## XI.

## THE OLD MAN'S STORY.

In 1811, when I was three years old, my father left Ohio to join the United States army under William Henry Harrison, who was on his way to fight the Algonquin Indians along the Wabash River. When the Indians were somewhat subdued, he sent for us — my mother, one sister, two brothers, and myself. We met him at the Eagle and Lion Tavern, on the east bank of the river, where, they tell me, a flourishing city now stands.\* We stayed there until spring, when, with two other families, we floated in barges down the Wabash River to Vincennes. My father, who was a saddler, opened a shop and worked at his trade. By the time I was seventeen years old, my sister had married, and she, her husband and my two brothers, who were older than myself, had gone to the western limits of the state of Illinois. Meantime also my parents had died, and thus at the age of

\* Terre Haute.



seventeen, in the year 1825, I found myself alone in the world, with nothing to hold me fast and many hopes to lure me farther west.

One evening as I sat in front of the trading store (Vincennes was the principal trading post for miles around), a line of covered wagons came into the village from the north. A young fellow jumped from one of these and went into the post, while the wagons continued on their way.

“Which is the tavern?” he asked me, when he came out.

I told him that I worked at the tavern, and that I should walk there with him.

In the course of a few hours, while we were together, he took a kind of fancy to me, and I to him. He was a handsome fellow, tall and muscular, had plenty of good clothes and some money. He told me about his boyhood and his ambition to get into the West; and I told him about my conditions in the world.

“Let us strike out for Illinois together,” he said.



I was overtaken with such joy at this proposition that I agreed at once; and in less than two days, in a covered wagon drawn by a team of good horses, we were on our way westward.

Although we had a rough time of it for the first few days,—on account of rain and our inability to help ourselves in this mode of travel,—the time passed quickly and had some rewards for the hardships we had to bear. Kent — that was my companion's name — was an educated fellow, saw the bright side of all things, was a fine shot, and as brave a man as ever lived. There was plenty of game; and we had a lively time, travelling by day, and camping wherever night happened to overtake us. We saw an Indian occasionally; but for the first week none that molested us. We made our way through woods, over plains, across rivers, the best we could, following no guide but the daily sun and our own wayward desire to go west.

One night we stopped before a very high



hill. We thought then that it was a mountain; but having approached it from a valley, it seemed much higher than it really was. There was a gradual ascent for some distance, then, all at once, without any incline, the huge mass of earth seemed to shoot straight up into the sky, like an immense battlement. We might have gone farther, as it was not yet dark; but it would have been as impossible to go over the hill as to go through it; and it was too late to go around, for the base was very large and covered with an almost impenetrable forest. We should have to travel many miles out of our way to get to the other side; and being tired and hungry, and within the sound of falling water, we decided to stop for the night on the spot where we stood.

We had never halted any place where things kept to themselves such a mysterious silence. Besides the more or less continuous jargon of the waterfall, which could be heard only a short distance, everything seemed motionless and dead; the trees were still, the



air asleep, no song of birds, or cry of wild beasts; and after a while the great mountain, as we thought it was then, threw over us a deep and heavy shadow from the rising moon beyond. After we had tied the horses for the night's graze, cooked what game we had killed, and had everything in order, we sat down for a smoke before going to sleep. We didn't say much to each other. It was not the kind of place to make us gay, and the spirit of adventure was at low tide. The dogs lay under the wagon already asleep, after a long day's journey with many a chase.

We were to sleep in the wagon that night, but now were lying on the grass. I was so tired that I was off into dreamland before I had carried out my part of our plan. Not so with Kent. Something must have been on his mind, perhaps there was disappointment or homesickness; for instead of going to sleep, he lay looking at the mountain, as the moon rose higher and higher, giving it a golden background and thickening the black-



ness of the shadow in which we lay. Higher and higher rose the moon, until it seemed to rest on the top of the mountain, which was all illuminated now, except a very small black streak of shadow directly before us. In a moment the light was over us and through the valley, and paled the fire which had cooked our supper, and which, while we were still in the dark, might easily have been seen from the top of the mountain.

Of this change in the night I saw nothing; but Kent saw it all. I felt something pulling at my coat, and in an instant I was awake.

“Look! look!” cried my comrade in a strange voice, pointing to the top of the mountain.

Against the golden moon on the very top, with outstretched arms on either side in the manner of a cross, there stood something that looked like the figure of a woman.

“The Holy Cross!” cried my companion.

There it stood. What was it? an apparition? What did it mean? How could it be



possible in this far away world? The Holy Cross stood still as stone, while the moon listlessly raised itself above the mountain. Was it somebody crucified by the Indians? Or might it not be the mingled effect of the trees and shrubbery? No, there were no trees and shrubbery on the east crest of the mountain. Were we both then under the influence of some hallucination?

“It is gone,” exclaimed Kent.

“I am going to see what that is,” said I, taking my gun, and starting to run around the right side. It was a great distance; but the moon shone bright, and I was able to go in a lively run.

This is what happened to my companion while I was gone:—

The night kept its silence; the only sign of life being the last gleams of our fire, beside which Kent was now lying, and an occasional sigh from the tired dogs under the wagon. Things grew even more quiet and lifeless; the dogs sighed no more, the fire went out, the wind did not stir, the



waterfall stopped its talking, and the moon went behind a large cloud.

The excitement of the vision having subsided in Kent's mind, he was about to fall asleep, when he thought he heard a faint sound, and one of the dogs came from under the wagon and held his head in the attitude of listening. There was absolute silence again for a moment, when a prolonged faint noise seemed to issue from the left of the mountain. This was repeated several times between intervals of death-like stillness. The sound did not fill the valley, but seemed to cut through the lower air, close to the ground, and go in different directions. Sometimes he could scarcely hear it, then again it came directly toward him — once in no uncertain tones calling, "Ma—ya—ka—no, Ma—ya—ka—no." It was not a harsh sound, and without growing louder seemed to have the mystery of becoming clearer and clearer. Presently it stopped, and Kent, going in the direction of the sound, endeavored to make his way to a small glade which he remem-



bered to have seen in the moonlight, where he might lie in ambush and find the meaning of this solitary voice in the forest.

He was within five yards of the open place when the moon broke like a flash from the clouds, and the valley was flooded with light. He entered the glade to see if it were clear, when a voice called, "Mayakano, Mayakano," and an Indian girl ran towards him with outstretched arms, still calling "Mayakano, Mayakano." She stopped abruptly when within a few feet of him, and stepped backward.

"Wait," said Kent, in what little Indian he knew.

"No, you kill us, you kill us!"

"Where are you going?"

"On the mountain where my father's people live. I believed it was Mayakano that walked in the valley," she continued, and seeing that her conferee meant no harm, she stopped her retreat.

"My only brother, he was killed in battle here in the valley, my father is old, and



there is no one to be chief when he is dead ; but the Great Spirit says my brother will come back and burn a fire in the valley. I watch nightly on top of the mountain, and invoke the Great Spirit, so (and she stood in the manner of a cross), as the moon rises over my father's hunting grounds : to-night I saw the fire ; I came ; but it is not Mayakano, it is not Mayakano, it is somebody else," and she fell to weeping. She was beautifully dressed after the fashion of her race, but she was not so dark or so grim-visaged, and had a voice as clear as crystal.

Kent took her by the hand and said, "Perhaps your brother will come to-morrow."

Just then the mountain became alive with noise — cries, shouts, and the clatter of horses' hoofs mingled, as if in terrible battle !

"Come, come," said The Holy Cross, holding his hand, "or you will be killed. They are coming down the mountain ; come — faster, faster !" Although smaller than he, she was fleet as a deer, and nearly dragged



him over the rough ground and through the trees around the right of the mountain. They turned at a crook in the base, stopped suddenly before a little knoll surrounded by a cluster of dwarfed trees, where The Holy Cross sank into the ground, saying, "Follow, follow!" When they reached the bottom of the crevice in the rock, she, still holding his hand, said, "Listen!"

The turmoil now raged through the valley. In as few words as possible, Kent told her about his companion having gone to the top of the mountain.

Just as she was about to climb out of the cave, saying, "I will go to save him, and return to you when it is coming day," he kissed her on the forehead. She turned, took his hand again, and looked at him, as if to ask, "What does that mean?" then she said, "You do not hate me?"

"No, I love you; save my companion's life," answered Kent, as The Holy Cross climbed out into the forest.

While these things were happening to my



companion (continued the old man) I had some very different experiences. At a distance of some three hundred yards in a semi-circle to the right of the knoll which covered the narrow mouth of the cave, a well worn path, coiling around trees and rocks, began gradually to ascend to the top of the mountain. For the last twenty yards of the ascent, the path continued straight, and became much steeper, running over the top and descending about the same distance on the other side to where the table-lands began, and the father of The Holy Cross lived with his people. Thus this path resembled a huge snake lying over the mountain, and was known in the language of the Indians as "Sleeping Serpent." It had been there as long as anyone knew, and there was nothing in the traditions of the old chieftain's people that told of its origin. Silent it had lain there for many years, through winter and summer, famine and plenty, victory and defeat. The old chief had played along it when a boy, had killed his first game down



its sides, and fought his first battles amid its crooks and curls, until now he was an old man, but "Sleeping Serpent" lay dreaming as at first.

Ignorant of where this path led, I hurried along it as quickly as possible. I reached the top, and looked over acres of tents filed in long rows toward the west. Before I had time to retreat, hideous noises filled my ears; and in an instant I was surrounded, rendered senseless, and with me that was all for the present.

When I regained consciousness, it was broad daylight, and I was lying in the sun between Kent and The Holy Cross, who were rubbing me vigorously. All around us, looking over each other's shoulders, was a throng of the dirtiest, most savage-looking red-skins I had ever seen. The Holy Cross had interceded for us, and we were not to be killed.

Come here to the window (said the old man, leading the way for Van Abering and me). Do you see that hill? (he continued, pointing out into the stormy night toward



the eminence we had seen on our approach to the log house). That is where we saw The Holy Cross in the moonlight; and on top of the hill lived her father's people.

. . . . .

We had not been with the Indians long before they grew fond of us, regarding us as having been sent to them from the Great Spirit.

Meanwhile the old chief died, and The Holy Cross chose as her husband my comrade Kent, who became Wamaset, the chief of the tribe.

. . . . .

During the next fifteen years the Indians were driven further west; The Holy Cross died; and Kent, who was now owner of these vast tracts of land, accompanied by the son The Holy Cross had borne him, returned to his native home — where I cannot tell you, I do not know.

(The old man stretched himself, yawned, and said:) Well, it's about bedtime now. To-morrow I'll take you on top of the hill.



Good night. (And we all went off to bed.)

## XII.

After a good night's rest, we arose and found that the storm had entirely subsided. The air was cold but clear; and after a few hours of sun, we should be on our way again toward the Van Abering farms. We gathered round the breakfast table with the little old woman, the girl, and the old man, whose gait was about as rapid as a tortoise, but whose mind, as seen from the story of the night before, was still as bright as a cricket.

“After breakfast, I'll take you to the top of the hill,” he said, “and show you where the Indians lived.”

The breakfast was soon finished, and the old man, the girl, Van Abering and myself left the house for the top of the hill. Behold! there it stood before us, just as it had been described, except that many years of travel and work had cut a road through



the right base. This road we took; and after a long time—the old man setting the pace—we reached the top. There the tableland stretched out as far as one could see. In summer these were doubtless magnificent fields of grain, where once roamed another people and thrived another civilization, known now only in books and in the memories of a few remaining pioneers like the one by our side.

“There is where we buried The Holy Cross—over there,” said the old man, pointing toward the edge of the precipice that was parallel with the log house below.

Thither we went.

“The Holy Cross has been lying there a good many years now. It was her wish to be buried here on the hill where she had always lived. The old chief, her father, was buried in a tree in that direction,” and the old man pointed back toward the left, “at the head of ‘Sleeping Serpent.’ The Holy Cross was a beautiful girl, except that her forehead was a little scarred with the marks



of the tribe," continued the old pioneer, waddling ahead of us toward a few white stones partially hidden among the trees. "That one is The Holy Cross's — that tall stone with the three diamonds on it; those were the marks of the tribe."

Van Abering grew white in the face.

The old man continued: "The name Kent is not on the tombstone; but some other names — of the firm that made it, perhaps.

We stopped before the tall slab, which read:—

◇ ◇ ◇  
THE HOLY CROSS  
WIFE OF  
WAMASET,

GUIDO ANDREAS VAN ABERING.

"That stone was sent here more than thirty years ago, and I put it up myself —"

"Oh! oh!" cried the girl, "grandfather, the gentleman, the gentleman!"

Behind us Van Abering had sunk to the ground!

Like a flash I thought of the diamonds on the tombstone in Greenwood Cemetery.



We carried him to the house; the old man saying all the while, "What could be the trouble — what could be the trouble? No doubt it was climbing up the hill."

Van Abering soon recovered; but he was hardly strong enough to continue the journey until the next day. He was greatly changed: he spoke almost nothing — only what was absolutely necessary; but the deep restlessness of his nature had subsided; he seemed contented, and I hoped that he would be ready before long to return to his home. However else he had changed, he now seemed to be satisfied and decided upon his future course.

The next day we made our departure.

"You must be careful about climbing hills," said the old man, little knowing what he had revealed.

Van Abering made no reply, only put his hand in the old man's, and came to the carriage.

Our journey was a silent one: Van Abering was neither sad nor gay, had no praises



or complaints; he seemed simply satisfied. In what I said, he took the interest that respect demanded, but no more. When nearing the end of our journey, he asked me to attend to the preliminary arrangements with the tenant, and to say that he was not feeling well and wished to go to his room at once. We had no difficulty in finding the vast tract of land which remained of the estate, and the home of the chief tenant, where we arrived when it was growing dark. We were cordially received, and led into the house before a warm open fire, while our rooms were being prepared. Each of us was given a letter. The one to Van Abering was from his mother, and read in part as follows:—

“MY DEAR, DEAR SON:

Come home, come home at once. . . . Rosamond's marriage will not occur. We know all. . . . Come home before we are crushed by despair. . . . On your arrival, we shall all go abroad to live. Telegraph and come at once.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE MOTHER.”



He held the letter between his fingers at the side of his chair where his arm hung listlessly. He was looking into the fire, as I read aloud the letter I had received:—

“This note is to tell you that Avonill died this morning. He was not in his right mind toward the end, and talked at random of his friends—principally Henry Van Abering, whom he wanted to be told that everything was all right—that he died bearing him no ill will, and such things. Poor Francis! He will be buried in Nashville, Tennessee. It is sad and lonely in the old house to-night.

Faithfully,

WILLIAM GARRICK.

Van Abering's letter dropped from his hand, but he did not break the silence; rising, he walked falteringly to his room. It was the last time I ever saw him. His supper was brought to him; and in the morning his room was empty. The country was searched in vain; Henry Van Abering was never seen again.

. . . . .  
 . . . . .



In due time I found myself again in the old quarters at Cambridge ; but how changed ! There were no more songs, music and laughter ; the old house looked glum, and seemed ever to remind me of the happy times I had spent there. The remaining days of my college life flickered quickly and uneventfully by ; and now, as I recall these images, a goodly number of years have sauntered into the past. The last I heard of Mrs. and Miss Van Abering was that they were living in England. The good-hearted Garrick became a doctor, as he wished ; and is now practicing in Newark, New Jersey. The madame and the old naval officer (who, had he been more worthy the confidence of youth, might have prevented these unfortunate events — and thus this story) were divorced in their old age. O for shame !

In the summer of 1897, I visited the Exposition at Nashville. Before leaving the city, I wandered one sunny afternoon to the cemetery, and put some flowers on a little mound that covered the body of



John Francis Avonill. Poor Avonill! He had his faults, to be sure; but who will throw the first stone! How quiet now — no smile — no story — no song! He had a light and cheerful soul, and took life gayly enough. Yet who will blame him for having smiled where others wept, in a world where there is so much sorrow?



# THE MYSTERY OF LOVE

*"Love has no law."*

Portugese Proverb.







## THE MYSTERY OF LOVE

ONE Saturday night some winters ago, several fellows were sitting around in my room in Harvard College telling stories. They were all Harvard men, and well acquainted, and seemed to feel no restraint therefore in doing what gave them the most enjoyment — or release from pain, as one of the pessimists in the company was accustomed to put it ; some were smoking, their feet cocked up on a level with their heads ; one lay on the divan, and another had got down on the floor ; it was a thoroughly Bohemian evening.

They had been telling stories — incidents which they had read, or seen in their own



lives. On the whole it was a very enjoyable evening. I ought not to say this myself perhaps, but since the others are not here, I venture the egotism. Nearly everyone had contributed something — a tale of love or adventure (principally the former), a volume of smoke, or a convivial disposition, which is perhaps the most indispensable of the lot. It was about eleven o'clock, and a kind of a lull had fallen over the fellows, they "had run out," as the expression goes.

Of the five persons present besides myself, there was one who could not properly be called a "fellow"; for that is an appellation given to college students. This man had been graduated for some years already; but despite this fact and others — that he was no longer very young, and was an instructor in the college — he seemed unwilling to break off his intimate association with the students, some of whom were even in his classes. His name was Morgan. The name somewhat fitted him. Though he was not heavy in body or extremely grave in mind, there



was yet a disposition of reserve or honesty or something about him which prevented gusto and won belief in what he said. Morgan was sitting on the settee in one corner, smoking too. He had been feeling absently about in his vest pockets, perhaps to rest his fingers or for something to do, for men are always playing with their pockets, when presently he drew out a dingy little piece of paper folded up. He had not said much all evening. But that was nothing strange, for he never had very much to say. He had looked a bit surprised when he drew the dingy little note from his pocket, and now sat musingly puffing and looking at it.

“Morgan,” said one of the fellows sitting on the other side of the room, “it’s your turn now.” The one who said this was from the West, and generally spoke in the manner nearest the end of his tongue. “You have n’t said a word all evening. You’ve got to do your share too.”



“Yes, let us hear from the faculty,” the other fellows shouted.

Morgan sat silent for a moment, still looking at the little piece of paper.

“Well, I will tell you a little story,” he began, his face lighting up as if surprised at himself that such a thing as a story from him should be a reality. “It does n’t amount to much, it’s just a little thing.

“Some years ago, a family by the name of Hayes lived in Burlington, Iowa. There were a father, mother and two daughters. Florence, the older of the two, was a fine-looking girl. She was more than fine looking; there was something of the statuesque—of the majestic in her; she was beautiful. She was a very active sort of a girl too, always doing something, and doing it in a manner which showed both grace and good sense throughout.

“When Florence was about eighteen years old, she began to receive a fellow by the name of La Rose, a brother of one of her bosom friends. Young La Rose was of



French extraction; his ancestors for a few generations had lived in this country, in Burlington, and had been very successful business men; they had saved their money through these generations, so that about this time the father of young La Rose was accounted a very, very rich man — at least for Burlington. Young La Rose was somewhat older than Florence — about four years, I should say.

“The father of the girl seemed to think that she was somewhat too young to see company very regularly, and fearing that she might take the young man’s calls too seriously, decided to send her away, believing that she would soon forget him. And then, too, the father of the girl was doubtful as to the moral stability of the young suitor. The girl was sent to Wellesley. She stayed three years, and apparently *did* forget young La Rose; she had spent the vacations at home, and so far as anyone knew she didn’t think anything about him, or he about her.”



At this stage of the story, Morgan relighted his pipe, twisted about into a comfortable position, and went on : —

“One summer about a year after the girl had quitted college, she went to Indiana to visit a girl friend of her Wellesley days. She had had a pleasant time it seemed, and was on her way back to Burlington, to be an ‘at home’ girl, as she had been for the past year. The train was drawing in a north-western direction through the state of Illinois. It had been a somewhat long and tiresome journey; there were frequent stops, and, almost as bad, no parlor car, nothing but the dirty, hot day coaches. A good many people were on the train too, and that seemed to make it doubly hot and disagreeable. She thought if she could have a coach alone, it would not be so bad; but there were perhaps a hundred other people thinking the very same thing. She did, however, have a whole seat to herself.

“After the usual shuffle of getting out and in at one of the stops, there were several



persons without seats when the train started again. One of these, a young man, seeing half of Florence's seat unoccupied (and perhaps her pretty face, too), asked if he might occupy the seat with her — if she had any objections.

“ ‘I prefer to sit alone,’ said Florence, not even looking up.

“The young fellow walked away.

“It was not very long before he came back and asked again if he might have half the seat — if she had any objections.

“ ‘Yes, I have objections,’ she said in a tone which was anything but inviting.

“It is almost extraordinary why he should have insisted upon sitting by her, for the fellow was of good breeding, I think. But it seemed that he must sit by her, it seemed that something was driving him; it is true that he was tired, but then something drew him toward her, too. He felt that he *must* sit by her, so in a little while he asked again.

“ ‘Well,’ said the girl, perhaps forgetting



her Wellesley training, 'if you must sit here, all right,' and she reluctantly moved her valise and herself next to the window.

"'Thank you,' said the young man, as he dropped into the seat.

"They had not gone very far, when the young man asked where she was going. He felt that he must not let her slip entirely away, he felt that he must ask her.

"'Down the road a piece,' she answered.

"'What place?'

"'Oh, just down the road a piece.' She did not want to tell, she did not want to talk, she was tired, and then she didn't know the young man anyway.

"'I'm going to get off at Burlington. Do you know anybody there?' he asked.

"'Yes.'

"'Very many?'

"'Yes, quite a number,' she said, a little less snappish.

"'Do you know anybody there by the name of Hayes?'



“Florence repeated the name slowly, ‘Hay—es? Yes, I know a family by that name.’

“‘Have they any daughters?’ asked the young man.

“‘Let me see,’ said Florence, turning her face toward the window, to hide an expression which might betray her bewildered curiosity, ‘I believe they have;’ and then she stole a look at the strange young man.

“‘Is one of them named Florence?’

“‘Yes,’ said Florence, this time stealing a good long look. She believed that she did not altogether dislike the young man.

“The stranger didn’t say anything for a few moments, then drawing a letter from his pocket, said, ‘This is for her—’

“‘Oh it’s mine! it’s mine!’ shouted Florence, grabbing the letter from his hand.

“The young man was amazed, so much so that he simply sat still and said nothing. By the time he had pulled his wits together and thought some awful things about the



girl, she had read the letter and was explaining that her name was Florence Hayes and that the letter was for her. It was a letter of introduction from a very good friend.

“They reached Burlington. The young man stayed in the city a few days, spending not a little of his time at Florence’s home. Never mind what the young man’s business was, and I believe I have forgotten anyway, but it happened that after that time he visited Burlington very frequently. He was of good family, and well known by friends of the girl. He began to think a great deal of her, and she of him.

“About a year rolled by while things were formulating themselves in the affections of these two young people, and it was finally announced that they were to be married. The day was set, the invitations were sent out. It was to be a fashionable wedding, with such numbers as the best form of the time and place would permit. The young man lived about a hundred miles



away. He was to arrive only a few hours before the ceremonies, which were to be performed at high noon.

“Florence and the young man had often talked about their incident in the railroad train, and how it seemed that they really belonged to each other even if he had had no letter of introduction. The young man, in his optimistic view of life, felt that she was intended for him; that his strange unrestful feelings when he first saw her showed that, in the righteous organization of the world, she was to be his. They both felt that something had guided them together.

“There was a great deal of work preparing for the wedding, everybody was tired out, Florence more than all the rest—and why not? Think of the worry to the bride that all should go well; of the serious meditation which such an important step must call forth when it comes to be realized that you are really going to be married, that you are not day-dreaming any more, that the



very dress which is to be worn once and never again hangs ready, that you have of a sudden been thrown into almost painful prominence, that a new vista of life opens before you, into which your vision goes but a pace and is unsteady—that you are to become a wife. Florence was tired.

“Jeanne La Rose, the sister of the young man who had occasionally called on Florence before she went to college, had been a constant, bosom friend of hers from her childhood. She was at Florence’s home this day, the day before the marriage. It was about one o’clock in the afternoon when Jeanne La Rose started home.

“‘I believe I’ll go with you,’ said Florence, ‘there’s so much commotion about the house that I can’t rest. I must get away until to-morrow, I am tired.’

Jeanne was very glad, and expressed her belief that the change for the night would give the necessary rest. With but little delay, Florence and Jeanne started in a carriage to the latter’s home, which was a fine



country house just a little out of town, while the maids and servants bustled about noisily preparing the wedding home.

“It was about three o’clock in the afternoon when Florence was lying in the hammock in a dark, shady place on the lawn. Jeanne had been reading to her, but Florence’s eyes closed and opened alternately as if she were keeping awake with some effort. Once when she closed her eyes, Jeanne stopped reading and allowed her to fall asleep. Jeanne went into the house. Florence slept.

“She had been sleeping about twenty minutes, when young La Rose came down the path and took the chair vacated by his sister. He did not awaken Florence, he just sat there and looked at her. He had seen her many times in the last two years, for she had often been with his sister here at their home; he had been indifferent to her and she to him, no feeling whatever had existed between them. But now he sat looking at her. Presently, bending his head



close to hers, he said, in a low voice, 'Florence.' She did not open her eyes. 'Florence,' he repeated softly. This time she opened her eyes. He did not move back, she did not move either. He said a few words to her, and they both got up and walked back towards the garden. Florence had said nothing all this time, she said nothing, now she did not even look surprised at this conduct of La Rose though he had not approached anything like it before, he had always been proper in everything. What was it ?

"They disappeared in the garden.

"That night the county clerk and a minister were aroused, and at midnight they were married — La Rose and Florence."

Here Morgan stopped. His pipe was out, all the pipes were out, the fellows had been listening.

"Well, that's a strange story. Didn't she ever say anything to the other fellow about it?" asked one.



“Yes, she sent him a note that night,” said Morgan, playfully twirling his pipe.

“Well, what became of the other fellow?” asked another.

“Oh, the other fellow!” continued Morgan, as if a little surprised that anyone should ask of him, “why he got sick and nearly died — he *did* die — in a way. While he was ill, the mother and sister of the girl nursed him very tenderly. But it was too much for him; you see he was in love with her. The mother and sister never had any more to do with the girl after that.”

Morgan began to unfold the dingy little piece of paper he had held in his hand all the time, and said, “This is the note she sent to the fellow that night.”







WHY SOME SCHOOLMISTRESSES  
DON'T MARRY

*"My age and tastes are no more the same."*

Horace.







WHY SOME SCHOOLMISTRESSES  
DON'T MARRY\*

SOME years ago, while I was yet a preparatory student, I met a young man by the name of Roberts, who was preparing at Exeter for Harvard. It chanced that Roberts and I spent a portion of one summer together at Marblehead, a fine coast above Boston Harbor, at the head of Massachusetts Bay. Roberts had graduated that year from Exeter, and was now looking forward to four years of hard study mixed with some foot-ball practice

\* I am not responsible for the facts in this story. I am only responsible for the manner in which they are told, and for the title. The reader may judge for himself whether or not the title is well taken. — M. E.



and five o'clock tea in Cambridge. He was a fine fellow, a sort of sympathetic young man. He easily found interest in my troubles in life and was willing to tell me his.

I had not been with Roberts very long before I knew that there was some paramount question in his life which needed settlement before he could be at peace with himself and the world. He was a good-looking fellow, and had means and ambition to make something of life; but withal there was something wanting.

One fine evening, after we had been out for a delightful roll in the surf, and after we had had dinner and were settled comfortably on the great veranda of his mother's summer-house, Roberts had it on his mind again; he had to tell. He was in love. Now that was nothing strange, I might have thought as much, for the actions of a man in love are always unnatural — anomalous. Love is positively the one thing which does not seem to follow law at all. Some lovers act thus and others so, apparently when all other conditions are



equal. For the same reason, say disappointment, one fellow will strive to get even by making a great mark in the world, while another will try to find out how much champagne he can drink, and how utterly unworthy of the woman he can make himself.

Roberts was in love, I said. But the trouble with him was not disappointment. He loved the girl and she loved him. I was about to ask where the trouble lay, but it was not necessary. A man in this condition will talk if you give him time.

Roberts had lighted a fresh cigar. "You see," he said, "what's a fellow to do?" Then he puffed a bit. "I've got four years in college yet, and she's as old as I am now," he continued, as if she might be younger if he hadn't the college years before him. "It's an awful long time to wait."

I believe I made some encouraging remark to the effect that time flies. I was about to use the Latin expression, but I thought Roberts might not take it seriously.

"I know," he said, after a pause; "but



it's a long time, and the worst of it is the girl's poor."

"Then you are surely marrying her for love, not money."

"Yes, yes, that's all right; but how's she going to get a living until we get married? She has a good education, she only lacked one year of graduating at Smith. I would like to help her, so she wouldn't need to do anything, but she won't let me till we're married, she says. What's a fellow to do?"

"Could she teach school?" I asked.

"She wants to," said Roberts, "but I don't like the idea. I suppose we'll have to come to it sooner or later though. I have a friend who could get her a good position, I think; if I could but bring myself to think that it wouldn't be too hard on her. You see, she's such a child."

We sat on the veranda until about eleven o'clock, when I left for the hotel.

It wasn't very many days until the girl with whom Roberts was in love came to Marblehead. She was a little body with



whom one might easily have fallen into Roberts's condition. She was not as tall as the figures of the French fashion plates, yet she was tall enough, had light hair, and a fine gentle face. She was not quick in her movements; one could easily tell that from her eyes; they were large, and moved leisurely, but very interestingly.

Roberts had a fine time while she stayed. She must have thought a good deal of him, for he was master of every situation. She would not have the responsibility of planning anything; anything he wished to do pleased her. He often wanted to be especially pleasant to her, but he could only be that by being most pleasant to himself.

I felt a little guilty once about the school-teaching suggestion. One day while Roberts was busy at something for a short time, I took a stroll with her on the beach. She said she didn't like to go very near the water, because the ocean seemed such a terrible thing that it frightened her.

"Jack wrote to me about you," she said,



swinging her arms together, and looking up at me apologetically.

I asked what he had said, if she cared to tell.

“Oh! he just said he told you about us — about him and me.” After a short pause, she continued appealingly, still swinging her arms in a girlish way, “Don’t you think I could teach school?”

I said that I thought she could, but I confess I didn’t think so at all. She was such a mild, wistful, little creature, wanting in everything that might approach sternness, rigidity, or discipline. I said, “little.” She was not little, but her naïve manners, conversation, and mode of thought, made her seem little to me—in fact to everyone.

After the girl left and the earth again became an ordinary thing to Roberts, I met him one day, and we had another chat.

“I thought at first,” he said, “that it was lack of individuality in her, but it can’t be that,” he continued, looking at me as if I



should immediately consent that it was not that.

He did not give any reason why it could not be lack of individuality; but I knew a reason; simply because she was different with Roberts than with other men. She was always, and with all persons, a child — nothing more. But she could not help that, and did not seem to have any consciousness that she ought to try to hide it. But one must not forget that children, too, have individuality — sometimes more than grown-up people. Yet with Roberts she had not a spark of it; she was in love with him.

Roberts was n't a very good companion after the girl left. She unfitted him for other people's society, I did n't interest him much any more; but then, neither did anybody else. In one respect, however, he was somewhat better, for he saw his way clear now. The girl had been rejoiced at the idea of teaching school, and "waiting for him," as she said, and he had brought himself around to submit to the inevitable.



In a week I left for college again ; but as I was not at that time going to Harvard, Roberts and I parted, promising to meet the next year at Marblehead.

The year passed, as years always do. I had heard from Roberts several times, and it was somewhat through the influence of his letters during this year that I afterwards went to Harvard myself.

I was somewhat late in getting to Marblehead the next year. I went late on purpose, with the intention of going directly to college when the season closed. I received a telegram from Roberts that he would meet me at the Adams House in Boston, that he would wait till I came. I reached Boston late at night, and went directly to the Adams House. Roberts had registered that day. But as it was very late, I retired for the night without seeing him.

We met in the morning. We were very, very glad to see each other. But to my sorrow, the poor fellow had something troubling him again.



“You are the only person,” he said, sadly, at breakfast that morning, “whom I have told about Miss ——, and my caring something for her.”

“Well,” I said, “I haven’t said anything to anybody about it; besides I didn’t know that it was a secret. Believe me I haven’t said a word —”

“No, no,” he interrupted, “you misunderstand, I know you haven’t said anything to anybody, but it wouldn’t matter if you had; that isn’t it.” He was silent awhile, playing with the food rather than eating it.

“Why don’t you eat something?” I suggested. But he didn’t seem to hear me.

“Read that,” he said, handing me a letter.

“Well, but this is from a girl,” I said, looking at the envelope.

“I know it is,” answered Roberts. “Can’t you read girl’s writing?”

The letter was from the girl who had not had any individuality the year before, and who had been delighted at the idea of teach-



ing school, and waiting for my friend. She had taught school, and was still waiting. I read the letter aloud, thinking there might be something my friend wished to explain, for I was not conversant with the latest developments in their affections. I began:—

“ ‘Dear Mr. Roberts—’ ”

“The devil!” interrupted my companion, “she used to call me, Jack—yes, Jack! Now think of that, ‘Dear—Mr.—Roberts,’ it’s an outrage!”

I paused a moment, then began again, repeating the “Dear Mr. Roberts” in order to get a good start and read right through. My friend looked up in a questioning expression which very much resembled the weather when it looks like it might rain, snow, be cloudy, or bright—all within the next fifteen minutes.

“ ‘I have received your last very estimable letter,’ ” I continued to read.

“ ‘Your—last—very—estimable—letter,’ think of that!”

I continued: “ ‘It is with the most pro-



found gratitude that I have the pleasure of seeing you soon again.'”

“‘Most profound gratitude,’” growled Roberts. “She used to say, ‘Dear, dear Jack, we’ll soon be together again — won’t we?’ Now, ‘most profound gratitude.’”

I went on: “‘Instead of yachting and tennis this year, I hope to devote some of my stay at the shore on my Greek and Latin. I think it is in the highest degree essential.’”

“‘In the highest degree essential!’” raged Roberts. “I don’t mind the Greek and Latin, if it must be; but think of, ‘in the highest degree essential.’ Heaven save us!”

I continued to read: “‘But surely you are familiar with the highly proverbial adage.’”

“That will do,” interrupted Roberts, “that last is more than I can stand or understand. ‘Proverbial adage,’ Great Scott! Please read the rest to yourself.”

I read it through, and handed it back to him.

“Think of such an ending, too, as, ‘your



friend,' snarled Roberts, as he jerked open the letter, "when she used to say, 'good-by, dear Jack,' or something else like that." He threw himself back in his chair, so forgetful, in his present feeling, of where he was that he began to load his pipe.

"How long has she been teaching now?" I asked.

"One year; just think — such form, such dignity, such stiffness, such propriety — all in one year, too! She's ruined for life! Do you think I want to spend my days with such an iceberg?"

"How long will she have to continue to teach yet before —"

"Continue to teach,' repeated Roberts, interrupting me, "forever so far as I am concerned."

We left that breakfast table years ago. The girl is teaching yet.

Heartless fate! it was the school's, not the girl's fault.



## MARY

*“ . . . she loved, still for the sake of living,  
for the heart is hungry too.”*

Les Misérables.







## MARY

IT was in the autumn that the doors of a small Western college were opened again. It was one of those little college towns far distant enough from any great centre of activity to be a world unto itself. The news of the outer world, with the latest *prima donnas*, politicians, and the newest novels, seldom penetrated its miles of surrounding forests. The only intrusions made by a knowledge of distant places, of living celebrities and their deeds, came through a few of the professors who had travelled some and studied at universities, and through a few weekly and monthly publications that



were placed in the college library. What interested the lads and lasses, besides an occasional ramble through the woods or a drive in the country, did not extend beyond the quiet limits of the sequestered town, where the God-fearing professors expounded ancient and classic lore (and scarcely anything else). The college weekly was their *New York Sun*; the president of the college, the chief executive of their government; the town lawyers, their Websters and Calhouns; and each other, their friends (and sometimes sweethearts). There were no great buildings to hide the beauties of sunset or hinder the cool breezes of summer. The town was on an eminence, commanding a view of the surrounding forests, which at the horizon seemed a massive wall against the rough and rugged world. It is perhaps these protections "from the madding crowd's ignoble strife" that make the graduates of a small secluded college cherish the sweetest memories of these idealistic years in the romantic time of life.



At the beginning of this college year, a few of the old graduates had come back. Many new faces appeared about the rooms and buildings. All the classes would be as large as the year before (which would not be very large). Everybody was shaking hands with everybody else; and many plans for another happy year of college life were being made, amid the best and truest good will to be found anywhere on earth.

A young fellow by the name of Percy Clayton, about whom this memory twines, was now a junior. He was a good-hearted fellow, and everybody liked his open and courteous manner. As a student he was fair, steady, and reliable, though not brilliant. Like many of his fellows, his home was in the country, where he had spent the vacation just ended. He was glad to get back to college, for he had already learned of better and greater possibilities than were open to him on the farm; and behind his smile and continued good humor there was a solemn desire some day to win a place in the



world of affairs. Every year that he had returned to college enriched his vague notion of things better than he had known, and filled him at times with the soberest thoughts, which often cleared his face of smiles and subdued his spirits into melancholy. Like most of the older students, Clayton was now helping the newcomers through the ordeal of entering college. (In this matter there is, perhaps, as much ceremony in a small college as in a large one. It is no additional expense to the college, and lends not a little dignity where much is needed.)

At one end of a long corridor which leads into some of the recitation rooms, and where the students matriculate, there stood a young lady with a paper in her hand and an expression of bewilderment in her face. She had evidently gone partially through the ceremony of entering, but did not know what to do next. She was a rather pretty girl, somewhat pale, and slenderly proportioned. In a few moments Clayton introduced himself — the



upper-classmen often took this liberty in these perplexing times to new students — and offered his assistance, which the girl accepted with becoming grace.

“What is your name?” enunciated the fat Doctor of Divinity who was registrar.

“Mary ——,” said the girl, in a gentle voice.

Clayton liked this girl, and when he walked to his room that night from the post office, where the fellows generally congregated, he could not shake her from his thoughts. But perhaps he didn't try very hard. A few weeks passed, but he did not forget her, instead unconsciously watched her very closely; and didn't feel as comfortable as perhaps he ought when she seemed pleased with the conversation of others. She did not have that effusive smile when she spoke which both wins and loses quickly; but rather wistfully, looked full yet shyly at him, and allowed her large brown eyes to linger a moment in his, as he passed. This was not art, though Clayton could have told no difference if it



had been. He was one of those honest lads to whom the coquette and true woman are the same. In his mind he condemned the former and praised the latter; but in the world of reality he could not distinguish; he had not had any occasion as yet to be schooled in that bitter school which teaches this distinction, and which too often goes to the other extreme and stamps all as false and selfish.

Clayton called very regularly. She was the kind of girl, he thought, that developed his better nature. She was quiet and gentle, never given to passionate exaltations of any sort. She would have been easy clay for a wicked potter; it seemed fortunate, therefore, for her as for him that they had met. They studied, strolled, and played tennis together. Where one was invited, it was understood that the other would need to be. Often when away from the view of their fellows, she would look at him with that admiration which was not gushing, but simple and unaffected, and which he was human and



innocent enough to believe a very uncommon occurrence in human affairs.

That year passed, and they separated for a few months. Clayton went back to the farm, and Mary to her home, which was in a small town about eighty miles from the college. Her father kept the hotel of the town, and was a well-known and respected man throughout the neighborhood. During that summer many letters were exchanged reassuring each of the other's affection. About the middle of the summer, Clayton visited the girl's home and had a pleasant time. Her parents were agreeable; they were not wealthy, yet comfortably fixed, respected and gentle people. As he was about to take his departure, he found that he had unconsciously got himself in love. He had never had any designs upon the girl, he had gone with her simply because he liked her company. But unknown to him, there began to be a demand in his life that no one but her could satisfy. He was sure now that with her the game was up. Thus it was arranged, but not with-



out many earnest conversations, that Mary should become his bride after he had graduated and to some extent won a place in the world. He returned home without care and in high spirits.

They returned to college in the fall, and it was the same with them as the year before. They grew up side by side, as the happy months glided by, became used to each other's ways, neither being independent of the other. At last commencement came, and they were to separate for — neither knew how long. Clayton went to Chicago and entered a law office, and Mary went home to live in the hope of that bright but indefinite day.

The birds sang again and the sun shone a second time on the summer's verdure since their parting. Clayton had visited once ; but could not come this summer, for he was making his way by hard efforts. Letters came, but not so frequently as at first, and as time went on they became hurried and strange. The girl's trust was great else she would have feared. Her mother often spoke to her



about the matter, but she would only say, "He will come when it is time," and go about her tasks as usual. Another summer passed, but neither Clayton nor letters came again. Mary's face turned paler with the winter's snow. Her mother had told her as gently as it was possible; but she would not believe. She became weak, then sick. When she arose from her illness, her voice was changed, her face sad, and her eyes fixed and uncertain.

To those who make a business of flirtation, who swear love to a different person every change of the moon, this would have been a matter lightly disposed of. This would have been one petty idol gone for a world of others. Let none such ridicule. In this artless girl there was a relentless conscience as pure as snow; and an affection that was everlasting. Rare enough jewels, indeed, in this practical world. The just often perish on what the wicked prosper.

Some days, when footsteps sounded, she



would go to the door and look out; but it would only be her father.

“Father, did you see him to-day? Maybe if you would speak to him, he would come. I saw him once, but he wouldn’t stop. Father, *you* speak to him. Tell him that it is the same as it used to be—that’s all.” Then the father would take her in his arms, for she was a child again, and smooth her snow-white forehead.

“Father, I don’t ask him to stay long, if he is busy. Sometimes he comes up to that door; but when I want to go to him, he waves his hand and goes away. *You* speak to him, father.”

The breast on which this child lay heaved with feeling no less than hers. “Yes, I will speak to him,” her father would say, “I will speak to him.”

“Don’t *you* love me any more?” she would often ask with that ineffable expression which shows the starving heart, but which the father’s love could not satisfy.

Thus she lived and dreamed as months



passed by, as her father died, as years passed by, until one winter they laid her little body beneath a mound by the side of her father; and then it snowed a long time, and the immaculate shroud covered their graves.

. . . . .

On one of Chicago's boulevards there stands a palace. Its richness and majesty are ever quiet and lonely, and no children play around its doors. There comes forth every morning a richly clothed, yet a bent and humble man. He had married well in the eyes of the world, for money and for station, but for no more. He had lived this life for years; but often when sorrow came through distrust and hate where trust and love should have been, he saw a figure come and go. It was the memory of the girl who stood in the corridor back in the olden golden glory of his college days.







IN THE HOUSE OF CONTENTMENT

*“Ah, sweet Content, where is thy mild abode?”*

Barnabe Barnes.







## IN THE HOUSE OF CONTENTMENT

IT will be forgiven me, I hope, for writing on a stock idea in literature. The considerations involved here have been often written about, I know; but then everyone has a right to his "say"; and so long as one's books are never likely to be used as texts in schools, or required reading in literary societies, there will be at least no very great imposition. It may be, perchance, that we can hit upon some new avenue of approach by which we shall come more directly to the castle of everyone's dreams, and see it as it appears in the glimmer of this lantern, which is no brighter than others, only different.



There is no formula of happiness with which anyone need try to buy off the disenchanting features of life. Experience is always bought at a high figure; and all the optimistic babble in the world will not heal the wounds of sorrow that flow ever and anon. Life *is* a tragedy. The death of the hero is all that tragedy requires, and every man is hero of his own life's story. To think about life honestly and with a degree of insight is no child's play. Do what one will, there will come a time — not afar off! — when he shall be only so much decaying matter, which, to state the truth bluntly, must be buried or burned not to inoculate the living with disease. It seems as if we had been asleep, from the beginning of time, in the semi-conscious cradle of infancy (for we cannot remember when we were not); and one day awaking suddenly from this lethargy, we looked out at the window for a moment, then fell back again to doze in the *nirvana* of eternity. And this moment was life.

Not long ago I heard a gentleman make a



speech who had been for twenty years a member of the Senate of The United States. The multitude was wild with enthusiasm as the orator fairly thundered in power and splendor. He looked like a thing immortal when he made that speech ; but on this rainy day he is rotting in a wet grave about two miles from where I write. But what is one life where there is a world full of people !

Whenever I hear the slow and solemn steps of Chopin's "Funeral March," I am not so much reminded of the exit of one mortal from this world as of the death and burial of humanity itself. There they come, the hoary giants, marching down the corridors of time toward the generation in which I live ; and soon they will stand before it as they have stood before every other. The entombed and rolling echo of their steps is now drowning the petty voices of fames of generations that have been, and will soon delegate us to the same speechless oblivion.

You have not long to think of these things before you curse God and wish to make your



quietus with a bare bodkin. Many a man does it; and many another makes a quietus of further effort in life, answering you with, "What's the use?" No matter how great his effort, no one ever came to anything but a corpse; and except for clinical purposes there is not any difference in the value of corpses; and it is scarcely probable that anyone calculates the worth of his immortality on that basis.

Scholars seek truth. There is no gain-saying what has been said above. It is the literal truth. Death is the inevitable crown of life; but whether it be of gold or thorns, who shall say! To know truth is wisdom; but to know truth concocted with much falsehood is greater wisdom, has fewer dregs, is sweeter, and is all that holds the world together. Nothing short of enthusiasm for some province of life's activity will prevent a man from jumping into the black abyss. One must chase a phantom — and vigorously too! — to get the most out of life.

I know a young lady who believes that it



is the goal of happiness, and even of importance in the world, to be a school teacher. This is absolute truth to her, and the source of much happiness. Yet not one in a thousand would agree to give the school teacher so prominent a place. She will be happy and useful with this misconception, and unless she change it for another, she will be miserable and useless without it.

A friend who was married recently tried to convince me that his wife is the sweetest woman on earth. Now this fellow's chances for happiness are good so long as he is able to house this fairy tale under his scalp and this wife under his wing. He is not the only person in this world carrying about such a delusion. I tried to convince him that another lady of my acquaintance had more to justify the claims he made for his wife. Before the discussion ended, three other gentlemen joined, each contending for the goddess of his choice. After much useless debate, we went our several ways, happier for not having been convinced. I have a



notion that there is nothing greater than to be a writer of interesting books. I know well enough that this is not true; but I don't like to argue against it, for so much pleasure and interest in life for me depends upon soberly believing it.

It is difficult enough for some persons to establish for themselves this kind of private truth. Sometimes it is the shabbiness of the clothing on one's back, the pains in one's stomach, or the needs of one's children that make the price of vegetables, cloth, and similar commodities a source of pleasant absorption. It is much better to have enthusiasm for the dry goods business than for nothing at all. A friend tells me that there is nothing so well adapted to give one enthusiasm for some sort of action as the necessity of supporting a wife and children; that this is no unimportant argument in favor of marriage; and that it keeps nonsense out of men's heads, and make them play a less giddy and dangerous tone on the harp of daily life. In the face of "*Γαμεῖν ὁ μέλλων εἰς*



μετάνοιαν ἔρχεται” and “Le pays du mariage a cela de particulier, que les étrangers ont envie de l’habiter, et les habitants naturels voudroient en être exilés,” and similar statements all the way from Menander to Montaigne and long before and after both, I wonder if my friend was telling the truth.

Not one person in a thousand is a harmless idler, or knows how to take rest. Leisure is a necessity for the development of art ; but also an ingredient in anarchy. It is harder to get pleasure out of continued idleness than out of continued work. One may have too much time as well as too little. When one has nothing to do, he is likely to attempt a quarrel with God concerning the mistakes in the construction of the universe. If such a one’s time were put to planting corn or making clothing, perhaps it would be better for the rest of us, even though he handed down from his swivel chair a beautifully bound and printed treatise on “The False Epistemological Postulates of the Transcendental Aesthetic as a Propaedeutic to the Transcen-



dental Logic." Books on philosophy are important to the world, of course, and so are well-regulated grocery stores and honest lawyers. If one, therefore, have enthusiasm in his travelling bag, let him keep it! Be not an image breaker, for perhaps there are nothing but images.

Old people ought to be careful not to disenchant youth of its rainbow gleams; but they are continually doing it. "When you get as old as I am, then you will see thus and so," says the old man, with not enough juice in his crusty memory to recall how much joy he got out of courting his wife fifty years ago (to say nothing of marrying her!). It is better for a crowd of young people to laugh and shout than to sit down, as did Jonathan Edwards, and resolve every day of their lives to meditate on death, the probable length of time required for every vestige of their memory to disappear from the earth, whether in fact life is immortal or whether at death the curtain falls never to rise again. If we were standing on a high



mountain overlooking the earth, and if our lives were without end, then we should say to the laughing, shouting crowd of young people, "Why make ye merry, to-morrow ye die, and the next day are grinning skeletons." But we are not on a high mountain overlooking the earth, and our lives are not eternal; and perhaps, the young people would n't derive much benefit, after all, in walking about to the end of their days with frozen faces. When we contemplate the eternal, then are our minds filled with serious questions; and then, according to our heart's religion, do we become melancholy or hopeful.

No one need try to delude his neighbors that he knows what is after death. Let the schoolmistress, therefore, work for her school, the husband for his wife, and let every other child of the world take to himself some falsehood. Let everyone think his sphere the greatest, let him work it with his might, and though it never bring him to his gilded city, it has him housed all the while in the best thing that this world can give.



Many are the delusions of youth. That is why it is so rich in happiness. But these fall away like husks from the grain; yet in prudent persons they will not all fall away; and from those that are withered and juiceless others will spring, perhaps no less delusive, yet having more *apparent* truth.

One can hardly ever realize the greatest happiness in the mere development of himself, for there is the ever-present consciousness of inevitable decay; and one no sooner gains a point than he seems to lose another; but one may find pleasing absorption in the perfection of an institution which survives his demise and abides by the effort of others, giving even a kind of immortality. There is no denying that there is much genuine happiness in the pursuit of some aim; and however false the aims of others may seem, it is well for us to hold fast to a definite fancy, and take exercise in so primary a lesson as work. "Arbeit ist der Tugend Quell." (I wish I never forgot this.)



AT COMMENCEMENT TIME

*"That was the last day of the royal line."*

Ovid.







## AT COMMENCEMENT TIME

I WENT back to the old college from which I graduated some years ago. It was commencement time, which always brings back some of the "old boys and girls" to their *alma mater* home. There were some whom the world seemed to have prospered in worldly goods, for they were well dressed and had some of the dignity which wealth gives; others had been prospered in piety, which their long hair, spectacles, Prince Albert coats, and a certain submissive crook of their clerical shoulders manifested; still others seemed to have neither the advantage of wealth nor the goodness that long hair and spectacles represent, yet in private conver-



sation they too showed some gains, a gentle soul, a pet theory, a good wife at home, or a bright boy — some admirable entities, to be sure.

Many of my more particular friends had changed. I say “many” — no, I mean all. In my college days there was a charming girl I used to see occasionally, who never had fewer than three sweethearts during a college year. Her time is now spent in taking care of three rosy little second editions of herself. In her great hope and greater imagination she was to be married to a millionaire, but is now happy as the wife of a photographer.

There used to be a young gentleman with us who was very proud of his beautiful hair. It was always parted with the exactness of a restaurant pie, and combed and curled according to the latest style. It was the envy of the boys and the idol of the girls — that is, the hair, not the fellow. But alas! either Providence is cruel, or the style of hair dressing is greatly changed.



“Dicebam, medicare tuos desiste capillos :  
Tingere quam possis jam tibi nulla coma est.”

It is parted now from ear to ear, running down in the back two inches below his hat band, with not enough long hairs on either side to allow of an attempt to raise them to the patch of sickly stubbles on the other, exhibiting a florid scalp as irregular in topography as Yellow Stone Park and as barren as Sahara. To be bald and to have a badly shaped pate is like having an ugly soul and no wealth. Let a man be as poor as he will, if he has a beautiful soul, he may still have much happiness. Thus while hair often deceives us about the shape of the outside of people's heads, money often deceives us about the shape of the inside.

Of all the changes time had wrought none were greater than the titles of some of my old friends. These were a few of their names among the boys in college, Hub, Gag, Tinnie, Bishop, and Kiddie. Now it is Mr. —, A. M., chemist; Mr. —, Ph. B., LL. B., capitalist; Professor —, A. M., professor



of Latin. These foolish, insipid, loud and intolerant college boys, who made the lives of the citizens in the little college town insecure and who, all the people predicted, would come to nothing good — these very boys are stalwart, manly men. I have an idea it is not good to be precocious, it makes one so liable to be childish in old age.

There was a time when all these dissimilar elements which this commencement gathers together were one. They studied in the same libraries, played the same pranks, raved over the same "profs," went in the same society, and at last received their diplomas from the same "prexy's" hand. But they are one now only for a while, then each will return to the nest that circumstances and his ability have allowed him to build.

A class from back in the seventies had a reunion. It struck me that the women looked better than the men. Most of the men were gray, and somewhat haggard of countenance. The gentle and sympathetic expression of the college lad was replaced by



the marks of many a battle for health, wealth, and honor—perhaps in some instances for only a humble living. Hand in hand they gathered around a large stone they had presented to their *alma mater* many years ago, and sang their old songs, and gave their old yells. There was genuine pathos in this spectacle. There was meaning in every face, as if their souls were being again renewed, and as if they were taking strength again from their mother's breast to live for honor and for right. The last notes of the song stopped, the united hands fell; for a moment no one moved or said anything, none laughed, and but few smiled. It was twenty years since they had sung these songs by that rock, it was a milestone on life's way, a looking backward, perhaps for some the last.

I said that the women looked better than the men. They looked fresher and younger, and their actions and countenances betrayed more of the college girl than the men's did of the college boy. They stood quiet, and seemed rather to be moved by the men's



emotions than by memory. If this was a representation of the average college woman, and if the women who took the arms of the men after the ceremonies were ended represented the average college man's wife, it is not the worst thing in the world for a woman to go to college, or at least to marry a college man. These women evidently preside over good, though perhaps in some instances modest, households. No doubt the women of the upper classes fare best in this world. If there is any abuse in this class, and certainly there is, the men are the unfortunates. Many a wealthy man labors from morning till night, from one year to another, without any suggestion of a vacation, while his wife and sons and daughters have a good time spending the money without even so much as appreciation. Many a man is working himself to death not only for his sons and daughters, but his sons and daughters-in-law, and their children and children's children. Generous, yellow-skinned, gray-bearded man, what love is this that is so sac-



rificing! The women who have the most to bear in this life are the wives in the lower classes, and yet there are none more faithful. There seemed to be none of these present at this commencement. If there were any anywhere, perhaps they didn't come. But I doubt if there were any.

In the evening I attended a meeting of the Greek-letter fraternity of which I am a member. The active members assembled were from seventeen to twenty-four years of age. There were about fourteen altogether. After most of the business had been disposed of (and these fellows have lots of it — you would be surprised!), I noticed that a restless feeling began to seize a few of the members. They began to whisper to one another; when presently a very proper and finely-dressed member of about nineteen arose and said, "Mr. President, I move that Brother Cooper 'set 'em up.'" The motion was promptly seconded by a member on the other side of the house. The President asked if the question should be put. Presently an-



other member arose. This was Cooper. He did not seem pleased, and began to argue the injustice of compelling him to do this thing. He said that he had always been generous, and was now hard up, that his graduation was costing him a great deal, and that he ought to be excused. He stated further that it was customary in the fraternity for the under-classmen to "set 'em up" to the Seniors upon graduation, and that he being a Senior, ought, of right, to be treated to refreshments by them.

By this time, three or four of the other members were on the floor, and there were cries for the question. Several other speeches were made — all very earnest, not the least bogus or insincere. This was indeed a peculiar spectacle. Here were thirteen men who had the notion that they wanted ice cream and cigars and other delicacies to tickle the palate, and decided that Cooper should pay. What could Cooper do? He beat them in every argument; but they had the numbers. The honorable president,



who by this time had become pretty hungry for refreshments, closed the debate in the middle of one of Cooper's speeches, and called for the vote. The unfortunate brother was compelled to spend five dollars for no fault of his whatever.

Upon inquiry, I learned that there was no grudge against Cooper; but that the caprice of the majority might at any time seize upon anyone, and subject him to whatever it chose. I learned that on one occasion the merciless majority passed a measure compelling one of the members either to make the highest grade in his French class or not to see his best girl on Sunday nights for seventeen consecutive weeks. The fellow made the grade!

After the meeting had closed, and the refreshments had been served, instead of receiving thanks, Cooper was grabbed by five or six of the others, and ruthlessly bumped against the wall. O college days!

In this world there not always comes a time of paying up, of compensation, or of



paying back, if you will. But I doubt whether the college student does not "get even" for so little as the slightest offence. There comes, just before the day of receiving diplomas, a very important day to the graduating class. This is a day on which old debts, old grudges, and old spites are made level, which could not perhaps be made level at any other time. The student cannot well tell the professor that he is an old fossil before he has passed his examinations; or say to the president that his policy of education is narrow and absurd. On class day, which is the name of this day of judgment, many graduating classes finally set at rest their sense of justice and responsibility by doing just such things.

On the class day of this commencement a play was given, which said: "Professor——, you are very gallant for an old man; you must not court so lovingly, especially in such conspicuous places, Miss——, who is twenty years your junior. You are an old fossil; and must relieve our eyes of further



offence by either marrying this woman at once, or by doing your courting in the night when the moon does n't shine."

To another professor the play said: "You are a bag of wind. Will you never stop talking? Do you not know that you make yourself very ridiculous by using so many hackney Latin and Greek phrases that you have studied in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary? We do not believe you understand Latin and Greek."

To another: "You are a silly old woman. Why don't you stop your whining and be a man? You ought to get married. There are plenty of nice girls here. If you can't support one by teaching, get a position for which you are better fitted. We recommend you to Mr. ——'s dry goods store, as a clerk in the lace department."

To the president was said: "You are very good and pious; but you could be better."

The under-classmen were treated to the severest blows. The Freshman class, which had evidently caused the Seniors much



trouble during the year, being much stronger in numbers, which counts for more than a knowledge of the classics and philosophy in a rough and tumble fight, received such compliments as these: "Freshmen, you are too green ever to hope of becoming ripe. The young ladies of your class ought never to receive you when you do not wear neckties and cuffs, and do not have your hair combed. By all means, Freshmen, have your hair cut sometime this summer before you go back to the farm, else your aunt Maria might think we have no barbers here; and for the sake of the college, don't let her cut it, as she did just before you came here at the beginning of this year. That would be awful. Mr. F—— Y——, of your class, owes Mrs. Brown fifty cents for washing. Mrs. Brown told us that she had done his washing all year, and that he had not as yet paid her a cent. See that this is paid, or we shall write to Y——'s father."

No one escaped against whom this mighty class had any feeling. Every one who had



been scathed had to take these things good-humoredly. Some of the professors seemed bored, but that only made the spectacle more ridiculous. It was discretion to smile at one's own head lying beside the executioner's block. Some even laughed, and got not a little enjoyment out of it. There was no use to cry, or lose one's temper, or try to stop the proceedings. It was Class Day, a traditional day, and all seemed agreed that there was no higher power than the graduates.

There is perhaps no time in a college student's life when more mingled feelings arise than the day on which he receives his diploma. There is joy and there is sorrow. For many a long year he has toiled patiently for this great event, for the time when he might consider himself qualified to take an active part in the world's affairs. But alas! when he begins to question himself, he finds that he does not wish to go out into the world, much less mingle with its coarseness and philistinism, and be compelled to take inter-



est in what to him resembles the ooze of a malarious swamp more than his notion of civilization. The tie that binds the friends of youth is to be broken forever. The many petty but pleasant concerns of their past lives are to be crushed out of his mind by the sterner facts of life, responsibility, labor and subordination. He has been a monarch, but is soon to become a slave. His friends who remain will watch his career; but to them he will be like one dead. If he be successful, his deeds may seem like the doings of angels; but his voice will be heard only from afar; and after all he will be in reality still as common a man as those he left behind, whose voices will come to him as faint and unfamiliar as his comes to them. His graduation is now a thing realized, and like most every other realization in this world, it does not give as much happiness as the striving that it costs. Filled with ideals and idols, he knows not whither to direct his footsteps, lest some one of the selfish and unmindful crowds should elbow his plaster of Paris to the pave-



ment; and there he would be left to weep over his fallen Madonna, shattered into a thousand pieces. It is a sad day — this Commencement Day — for these young fellows. To the young ladies there are fewer paths open, consequently less bewilderment concerning their future. But the separation of friends is perhaps more keenly felt by them than by the young gentlemen.

Many a college graduate asks himself on this memorable day, as he asks himself again and again through life's long journey, "Was it worth the while?" This is not as open a question to many as it is to me. But however it is answered, and however much the college man has yet to learn after he leaves his *alma mater*, one thing is true: it is glorious to have gone to college; and if rightly directed, one's life may retain at least some of that lustre, and shed it upon those whom he meets in the many highways and byways whither he shall go.







A FEW FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF  
HARVARD

*“ The summer dawn is breaking  
On Auburn’s tangled bowers,  
The golden light is waking  
On Harvard’s ancient towers.”*

Holmes.







## A FEW FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF HARVARD

A JAPANESE lecturing in his own country on American colleges said that Harvard was a place where young men played foot-ball, and on rainy days read books. Though in the science of rhetoric we call this a hyperbole, and in common parlance, a falsehood, it has nevertheless a germ of truth.

During the first few days before college opens, one may stand anywhere about the buildings and see scores and scores of young men, arms akimbo, carrying, after the English fashion, bundles of all sorts of sticks.

So far as I know the English carry only canes and umbrellas; but these Harvard students carry canes, umbrellas, fencing foils,



guns, tennis rackets, and almost every other implement known to athletic sport. One begins to wonder whether Harvard is a university or a picnic ground. All these instruments, in connection with pipes, which are smoked to strengthen the jaws, but more often strengthen the breath, are used to develop the body.

One is reminded of the wealthy farmer who, when asked if he were going to send his son to college replied, "No, John never did, and I s'pose never will care anything for games."

Nevertheless, however much college students may be criticised for time spent in athletic sports, one beneficial result is inevitable. The time when one may not lay claim to the title of scholar unless he have pallid lips, sunken cheeks, poor lungs, and a torpid liver, is passing away. Athletics is the best medicine for all ailments, except toothache, love sickness and other kindred ailments. Tennis when played with a young lady, is even good for love sickness.



A very marked peculiarity of Harvard students is that a large percentage wear glasses. Specs, of some sort, it seems, are as essential to good taste as the latest styles in clothing. Aside from correcting optical defects, glasses keep the dust from one's eyes, for in New England there are at times very high winds, so that those who wear them for style may, to some extent at least, quiet their consciousness of pride.

The pipe habit has a very strong hold on the Harvard student. On endeavoring to find why pipe smoking should be more in vogue here than at other colleges, I was told by an under-classman that mosquitoes are very abundant in these regions in summer, and that in winter the severe cold obliges one to carry as much heat as possible about the body. Thus the whole thing is reduced to a scientific basis. What more could one ask?

In Cambridge some statues dot the beautiful campuses, and hundreds of paintings hang about the walls. In the Common there



stands a bronze figure of John Bridge. No doubt this gentleman was worthy of a statue—all good men are. But when I found that it was given to the city by Mr. Samuel J. Bridge, a descendant of the gentleman thus immortalized, I was reminded of an ambitious merchant in Saginaw, Michigan, who erected a statue of himself in the most conspicuous place in that city. The Cambridge affair is more delicate; but does it not savor a little of the same thing? There is more art talk in Cambridge and in Boston to the square foot than there is to the square mile in Chicago—perhaps more *real* art too. “But what is art? It is not utility,” says the Chicagoan, forgetting all the while that statues make fine loafing places, convenient match-strikers, and excellent whetstones for chronic whittlers. No great city could think of having a poetic or romantic riot, unless the rioters gathered beneath the bronze or marble image of some historic personage. To say that John Jones was killed in the Haymarket does not make heroic music



murmur in the ear like, "He fell beneath Saint Gaudens's Lincoln." Great romance requires history.

There are many paintings, too, in this old site of learning. In the long run, paintings are cheap: the walls of some of the storehouses of art have not been papered for years, the portraits of forgotten saints and statesmen, of mayors, Puritan farmers, and school trustees affording ample decoration. This is a fact not yet appreciated in some parts of our country. In some of the dusty and smoky centers of population, the art of the easel ought to thrive more luxuriantly.

I have referred several times to the young men who go to Harvard as "students." This is a word one seldom or never hears. It is always the "Harvard man." The word "student" seems to carry with it the idea of infancy or youth or immaturity, and everything of this sort is spurned by the devotees at this classic shrine. I think the "Harvard man" expression much better. These young men are a manly lot of fellows. In my



sojourns in other college towns, I have been frequently accosted by boarding-house keepers and washer-women, either to pay somebody else's debt or to persuade an erring brother to pay his own. Whether my countenance is that of a debtor or a corrector of public wrongs, I have not as yet decided. I am free to confess, to the credit of Harvard College, that in all my stay there, I was never accosted by a single washer-woman.

Another expression common about Cambridge and Boston, and through all New England, is the "Commonwealth of Massachusetts." Since we have so many states, it is not an unwelcome variation; but no one revels more in this expression than the Bostonian himself.

One of the greatest treats for the Harvard student is Boston, the city in which the sun rises and sets, the "Hub of the Universe," where bootblacks read Ibsen, and servant girls recite Shakespeare and dote on Browning. You will scarcely find people anywhere who are more contented with their



surroundings than the residents of Boston. If any disease really flourishes it is anglo-mania. It is little or no part of their education to know whether Indianapolis is the capital of North Dakota or Kentucky. They are not extremely wealthy; but very critical in matters of science and art.

In Boston one may believe what one likes with impunity, if reason can be given why judgment should not be rendered against him. The theatre is loved like the church, and is quite as great a source of moral inspiration. The city government is in the hands of the good people, and there is law and order.

A Bostonian is as proud of the history of his town as a small boy is of his first long trousers. I was shown the Boston Common one day, where the boys of the Revolution skated. The friend who was showing me about said that it was the very same pond, and an enthusiastic gentleman maintained that it was the identical water.

The women are not so voluptuous as in the



South and West ; but they have very great intellectual interest. They are full of ideas and entertaining talk, which interest the men quite as much as the physical buoyancy other women hold continually in evidence. They have a charming air of independence. In the street-car they can stand as well as the men ; and in the drawing-room they know how to please without resort to fawning or entreaty.

All these treasures of Boston a Harvard student may enjoy, if he have the cunning to find, and the ability to be worthy of them. If he have artistic instincts, he will find knights of the brush, the key-board, and wet clay. It is much as it is in Paris, with less Bohemianism and much more respectability.

There are all sorts of organizations about the university for the advancement of learning, and people are judged more by breeding and learning than by money. It has been so from the beginning. Nearly everyone is interested in the beauty that decorates the



world, and the music and books that charm it. Instead of being shown the millionaires, the scholars are pointed out. This is a pleasant contrast in a land where wealth seems to be the only thing worth striving for. One is shown where the great and wise have lived and labored, and the historic places connected with their memory. West Boston Bridge was pointed out to me as the bridge Longfellow had in mind in his poem "The Bridge." One day, coming back to Cambridge, I walked over this bridge, much to my sorrow. There was a high wind, and my hat blew off into the water. I recalled, with certain modifications, those meaning lines:—

Among the long black rafters  
The wavering shadows lay,  
And the current that came from the ocean  
Seemed to lift and bear my hat away.

How often, oh! how often,  
I wished that the ebbing tide  
Had not borne my hat on its bosom  
O'er the ocean wild and wide.



For I was very cold and restless,  
And my head had little hair,  
And the hat that was taken from me  
Was all that I had to wear.

After walking many squares with reverent uncovered head, I arrived at my room and began to doctor a severe cold, which with many pleasant recollections of Harvard College, I carried away several weeks after.



## PROSE-POETRY AND SYMBOLISM

*"It is a little piece of prose,  
In form and style excelling;  
But what it means no man knows,  
It is, indeed, pastelling."*

Chap-Book.







## PROSE-POETRY AND SYMBOLISM

ALL lovers — not sweetheart lovers, for this is no tale of woe or wooing — of good literature must certainly have watched with interest the trend of polite letters in this latter part of the century. The end of this century has come to be called decadent. This has been due to the everlasting revolt which the modern novel, more than anything else, has made against the social order of the day. The one word that characterizes most nearly correctly the theme of the modern novel is "sociology." Nearly every new book (and especially those by women) has some new fault to find with the relations which make the world of mankind an organic whole. I am not one of those who look disparagingly



upon this class of literature as a whole. Certainly Ibsen, who is perhaps the greatest thinker among these, has shown an insight into the social relations of to-day which, it seems to me, no thoughtful person can disparage. But the general cry is that modern literature is continually pulling down our time-honored institutions, and offers no substitute or remedy; it is destructive, decadent.

But decadence has not only taken place in the subject-matter of literature, but also in its form, is the cry of the critic. The drama, with many dramatists, has lost its technique; the scene is changed every five minutes, and there are all sorts of characters (many without moral character at all) instead of the stock characters of time-honored dramatic form. Some recent "reputable" novels are entirely without form (and are void, too). They run on and on, and "kick" and "kick" until the writer gets tired, then the characters are killed or get married (which is nearly as bad) and the novel is ended.



Poetry is now written in prose ; alas ! who would have thought it ! Thus the critic cries, "decadence, decadence everywhere."

It is of this latter form of decadence that I shall babble a bit. The most liberal definition of a poem is, I should say, passion on paper. Now, the only reason that some passion is written in verse is to give it an additional force to reproduce itself in the reader, for certain passions seem to associate well with rhyme and rhythm ; but, it seems to me, not all. There are feelings as formless as a muddy street ; for example, terror. Mere want of form seems to heighten this emotion. Why then versify it ? I can see no artistic reason. Thus, I think it may be truthfully said that some feelings are more effective in prose. This is what the prose-poem is, or should be. The form a thing is written in does not characterize the kind of literature it is. Some paragraphs in prose are very poetical, and some "things" in verse are very prosaic.

Closely allied to prose-poetry is symbol-



ism, another manifestation, according to the decadent critic, of the degeneracy of "the end of the century literature." Maurice Maeterlinck is perhaps the greatest modern symbolist. Symbolism in art is where the production — book, picture, statue, or any other product of the fine arts — tells something in a new language, that is, implies and suggests a thought which it does not speak out. It was the highest type of symbolism when Christ "called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them (the disciples) and said: 'Verily, I say unto you, except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'" So in each of Maeterlinck's dramas there is something told which is not said, there is a meaning lurking therein.

But Maeterlinck is more than a symbolist, he is a poet. The same dramas which speak so forcibly through the symbol are also great poems — poems of terror in which that emotion is aroused with the subtlety of genius. Though the dramas are written in



prose they are as poetic in the realm of the terrible as anything in any modern literature. They are prose-poems as well as dramatic symbols.

It is generally understood that these two forms of literature are quite distinct; but I do not see how that can be. There may be poetry without a symbol; but hardly a symbol without poetry, so long as the symbol is literature in the restricted sense. The meaning of the symbol must somehow be made manifest; and it is invariably done through the emotional effect produced either in a character or directly in the reader. It is therefore no less a poem than a symbol.

I have attempted below a bit of this kind of literature, the symbol prose-poem, which is given, of course, with due apologies. The reader must try to look at the following from an artistic point of view (if it be not sacrilegious to call it art), as a specimen of, or kind of introduction to, that tendency in the art of letters which has been so ingeniously developed by Maurice Maeterlinck, Bliss



Carman, Gilbert Parker, William Sharp, and others.



### THE OLD MAN'S ANSWER

“Everyone has a right to his own opinion — that is true,” said the old man.

“Of course he has, by that sentence you show that you are a philosopher. But these things are nothing to me now.” Then, more gently, he added, “they were once; but when youth goes, so does credulity.”

The old man said nothing, but turned his kindly old face, nearly hidden in a snowy beard, toward his companion. It was a look of which one could use the word venerable. His eye had no fire, but oceans of compassion and affection.

The younger man said: “To be honest,— and I can be so with you,— what do we know? Here is the world, with its history — what a history! — every epoch brings new morals, new religion, a new God. To-day we ridicule what we worshiped yesterday. To



what shall we pray to-morrow? But why do I speak about these things?" he continued in a low and hopeless voice, as he drew his glasses from his eyes and the lines disappeared but slowly from his forehead.

The old man was not looking at him now, but sat meditatively with his pure white hands folded on his lap; his snowy hair, falling over his temples, nearly touched his shoulders, now bent with years. "No, speak on," said he in the tremor of age and gentleness. But for the settling of the waning embers in the great, old fire-place, and the roar of an occasional gust of wind which played havoc with the falling snow, there was silence in the room — but not in the heart of one.

The younger man's brow was knitted again. "Who is right?" he began; "to-day from ten thousand pulpits nearly as many doctrines come. Each one knows he is right, and hell will get those who disbelieve. Are any of them right? How the mysteries of the Bible fade in the searchlight of science!



—fire will *always* burn! death *is* eternal! Yet it is pleasant to lie to the soul; I have done it, but cannot now." His lip curled as he spoke this last sentence. It was not the face of pompous ignorance, for that is easily brushed away. He had pursued with ardent care the systems of thought which would reason God and immortality into the world, he had had a light in his breast, he had had hopes; but years had passed, and he was bereft now. It was, therefore, the grimace of a mind which had gone to the limits of knowledge, and had recoiled from the eternal hopeless night beyond. It was the heart terror which sooner or later draws a pall over the heart itself—and that is resignation.

Only the early gray glimmer of winter evening now lighted the room. The old man was still silent; his face showed the compassion of his noble soul. A little sunbeam, his grandchild, was sitting in his lap. He was smoothing her golden hair as her eyes looked into his face. Here in this chair



sat the last two of them left on earth, yet they did not despair.

“Grandpapa, grandpapa, what makes it snow?” asked the little gold head, wistfully.

The old man only pressed the little darling to his breast and she understood.



#### WHAT THE NIGHT SAID

“So you are going away,” she said pensively. “I am sorry. I shall miss you — we have been much together. How long the time will seem!”

Outside it was night and winter, the wind howled about the house, scattering the dingy snow off roof and knoll o'er the desolate frozen streets; the tall stark trees creaked against the bitter blasts — without 't was night and winter.

“I go to-night,” said a voice dead with resignation — “to-night.”

“We have known each other so long, you



have come so often, that I cannot think how 't will be. Why don't you stay? You have everything here — friends, home, hope. What else do you wish? The desolate world cannot give you more. Yet you will go?"

The wind blew, the night grew darker, the windows rattled in the casement.

"I go to-night," the deep, dead voice said — "to-night."

"I cannot understand — was our association but a passing comradeship? Last summer did we not walk the woods together? were we not happy? you often told me so. Oh, stay! Think of the future! You will not go! You will not go!"

The door opened, the wind still howled, the trees still creaked, the night was darker, and the dead voice only said: —

"I go to-night."

Into the dark, with outstretched arms, she cried, "Oh, stay! Oh, stay! I cannot understand! I cannot understand!" The night wind moaned, "Cannot — cannot understand?"



## THE LIGHT WITHIN

It is a night in November, not cold, but chill ; a dim mysterious twilight blurs the blackness of the night. The place is not far from a bridge, under which the glistening water quivers in the light shining from the windows of a few house-boats on the bank and a dim signal-lantern hanging from the middle pier.

Clumsy footsteps are heard in the distance coming rapidly towards the river ; everything else is still. The footsteps become louder and louder and presently a low-set, heavily-built man emerges from the dark. His head, covered with a slouched hat pulled down upon his forehead, turns furtively to the right and left. He suddenly stops and looks about.

Coming up to the railroad track on an inclined path from the house-boats a tall, slender man is seen. He reaches the grade, stands for a moment, stretches himself and yawns, then saunters towards the bridge.



They meet. The short man mumbles something.

TALL MAN.

What?

SHORT MAN.

(*Nervously.*) How far is it to the bridge?

TALL MAN.

Not very far. (*Pointing to the signal light.*) Where you see that lantern.

SHORT MAN.

The lantern?

TALL MAN.

Yes, that is the middle of the bridge.

SHORT MAN.

You know these parts?

TALL MAN.

Yes.

SHORT MAN.

Where is the river deepest?



TALL MAN.

Beneath the lantern.

SHORT MAN.

(*Repeating.*) Beneath the lantern. Would  
one strike bottom there?

TALL MAN.

From where?

SHORT MAN.

From the bridge.

TALL MAN.

No, for there is a whirlpool there. To  
jump from the bridge is death.

SHORT MAN.

(*Hurrying towards the bridge.*) Beneath  
the lantern is death. Beneath the lantern  
is death.

TALL MAN.

(*Becoming animated of a sudden.*) Wait!  
Wait!

(The short man stops.)



TALL MAN.

(*Approaching.*) Where are you going?

SHORT MAN.

To the lantern where the whirlpool is.  
Why do you call me back?

TALL MAN.

The watch will see you ; he will drive you  
back. No one is allowed on the bridge at  
night. It is very dangerous.

SHORT MAN.

Then I will go. What do I care for the  
watch?

TALL MAN.

But you would not murder, too?

(There is a moment's silence. A distant  
tocsin begins to strike.)

TALL MAN.

(*Counting the strokes.*) One — two — three  
— four — five — six — seven — eight — nine  
— ten — eleven. Soon the watch will put out  
the light and go home, when the last train is



heard to whistle; then you can go to the middle of the bridge, where the lantern hangs, above the whirlpool.

SHORT MAN.

And till then?

TALL MAN.

(*Starting down the path.*) Till then come with me.

(It is black night now. They feel their way down the path. The lights in the house-boats are out. They have descended, and walk along a steep bank, beneath which the river splashes the boom-logs.)

SHORT MAN.

(*Stopping and looking down.*) Is the river deep here? I hear splashing-- what is it?

TALL MAN.

Boom-logs. Come!

SHORT MAN.

One could not reach the water here, then?



TALL MAN.

No. Come!

(They reach the brink and enter a house-boat.)

TALL MAN.

Sit down.

SHORT MAN.

It is very dark.

TALL MAN.

Yes, the candle has burned out. We must not speak loud; it is time for sleep.

SHORT MAN.

Who will awake?

TALL MAN.

(*Ignoring the question.*) And to-night you would end it all?

SHORT MAN.

Yes, to-night.

TALL MAN.

Why to-night?



SHORT MAN.

Why not to-night? I belong nowhere. There is little happiness in this world. Happiness is a state of mind which none but fools and children enjoy. The moment thought enters into life, that moment the inevitable tragedy of the world appears.

To think is to see the inconsistency of all things.

TALL MAN.

Why think?

SHORT MAN.

*(With a cynical chuckle.)* That is it. How can one who is capable of thought help thinking? I have studied at the universities. Before I studied, when I was a child, I was happy; but now that I have studied the world I see it as it is. The ignorant chase phantoms; that is happiness. The wise cannot sufficiently coddle the mind to do this.

TALL MAN.

You are wealthy then?



SHORT MAN.

I have a living — my father left it to me.

TALL MAN.

What is your business ?

SHORT MAN.

I have none.

(There is a short pause).

SHORT MAN.

How can the dancers smile when they represent so many funerals? How can the mouth laugh at all when it is soon to be as dry as a crust ?

TALL MAN.

Why think of these things ?

SHORT MAN.

Are they not true ?

TALL MAN.

Yes, but —



SHORT MAN.

*(Interrupting.)* I hear chains. Do you hear chains rattling?

TALL MAN.

I hear nothing.

SHORT MAN.

We are moving. I feel that we are moving.

TALL MAN.

*(Jumping to his feet.)* We are moving! The boat has broken loose! My God, we are lost! The rapids! the rapids!

SHORT MAN.

*(Calmly.)* Now I need not go to the middle pier where the water is deepest. We will die together.

TALL MAN.

*(Thrusting open the door.)* We are away from the shore! The rapids! the rapids!

*(The cry of a child is heard in a corner of the boat.)*



SHORT MAN.

What is that?

TALL MAN.

*(Raging.)* We are lost!

SHORT MAN.

It is a child's cry!

TALL MAN.

It is my child's cry! We are lost!

SHORT MAN.

*(Groping about and finding a child.)* A child — it is a child!

TALL MAN.

We are upon the rapids! In a moment we are lost!

SHORT MAN.

*(Lifting the child upon his back.)* Now I have a duty. Thank God. Life! Life!  
*(Plunging into the water.)* Follow! Follow!

*(The water seethes and swirls, the train whistles, the light on the bridge is out, and it is black night.)*















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